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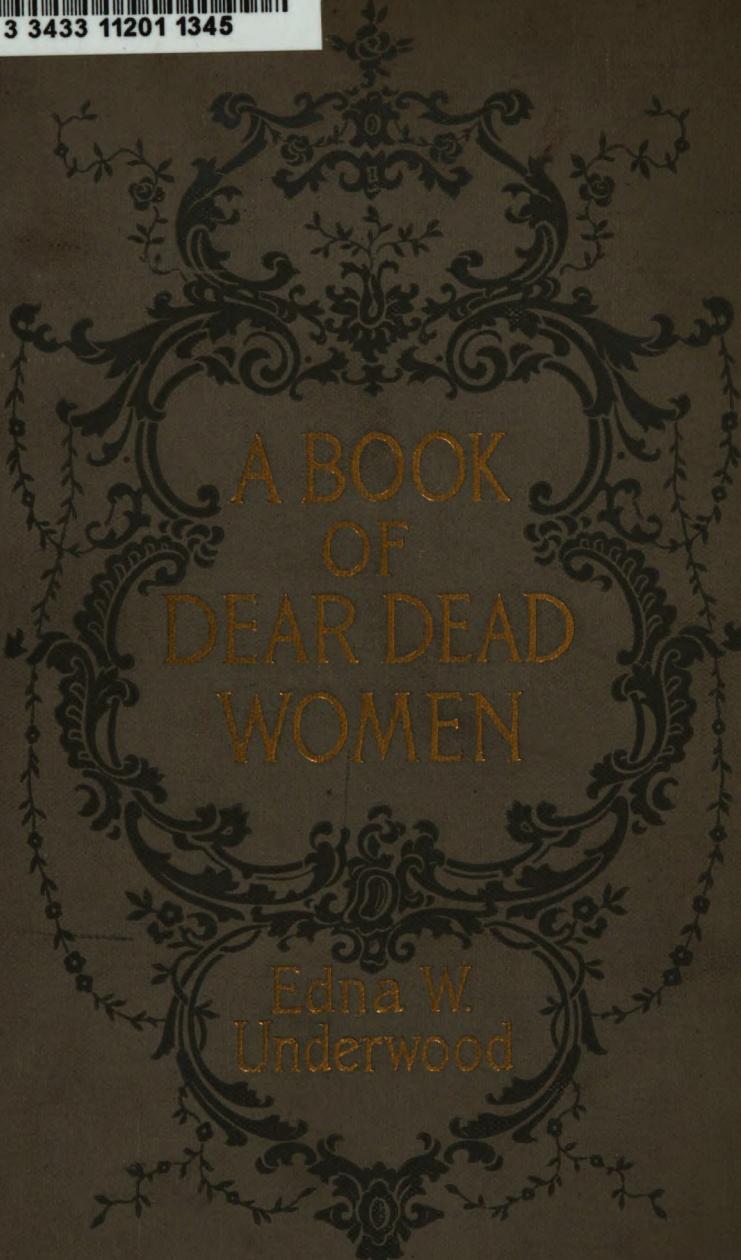
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A large, intricate gold-tooled floral border frames the title text. The design features symmetrical scrollwork, roses, and leafy branches, creating a circular pattern that covers most of the front cover area.

A BOOK
OF
DEAR DEAD
WOMEN

Edna W.
Underwood

C. W. L. M.

High

A BOOK
OF
DEAR DEAD WOMEN

A BOOK OF DEAR DEAD WOMEN

BY

EDNA WORTHLEY UNDERWOOD

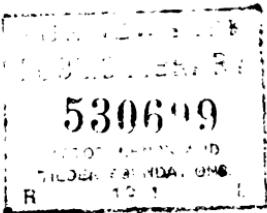
"Dear dead women with such faces"—

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1911





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J. 1. 13

I WISH TO ACKNOWLEDGE MY INDEBTEDNESS
TO *The Smart Set* FOR PERMISSION TO REPRINT
“THE PAINTER OF DEAD WOMEN,” WHICH
APPEARED IN THE ISSUE OF JANUARY, 1910.

EDNA WORTHLEY UNDERWOOD.

J. 1. 13

scribbles,
Mar. 25, 1911

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ONE OF NAPOLEON'S LOVES

FROM THE DIARY OF THE COUNTESS TATJANA
TSCHASKA

*"Polonus sum,
Poloni nihil a me alienum puto."*

ESTATE MIODUSCHWESKI,
NEAR WARSAW ON THE VISTULA,
June 8, 1806.

NEVER did spring come so early. In April, when the country is as white as the coverlet on my bed, fields were dotted with black rings at the base of trees which glistened with moisture.

Returning birds twittered under the eaves. Rivers awoke and became merry. In the distance rose the smoke of melting snow. Even in the North — in White Russia — so travelers tell, the ice broke. Now the country is wonderful.

I have seen the foam-edged waves of the Baltic come rolling in by the mouth of the Niemen, just as spring rolls northward its foam of flowers — to rescue us from the

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grasp of winter. In the same way, I wonder, will the army of France come northward to rescue Poland from the grasp of Russia? That is what every one talks about. That is what every one hopes. I hope it, too, but somehow I do not believe it. I have no faith in France. Yet it would be no act of generosity on her part. We Poles have bled for her on every battlefield of Europe. It is little that in return she should give the nation life. France may intend to do this. It is hard to tell now. No trustworthy news reaches us. The Prussians suppress and burn the mail lest we take heart and rebel. They say, however, that the Great Napoleon has conquered Italy and is now making plans for the North.

June 12, 1806. The country is lovely! The avenue of poplars that leads to the house is enveloped in lustrous gauze. The birches and the willows and the lindens are green flames that shake in the light.

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In the fields I can see the white head-kerchiefs of women who are working, and beyond, the white spire of the church. Those two white objects symbolize Poland — hard work and hope — the effort for something beyond and, perhaps, unattainable.

I love this country with its fine distances and long levels where the eye is not impeded. Yet it has affected our natures, and not always advantageously. It has made us think that great things are too near and too easy to get.

Small wonder that others have coveted Poland! — the Swedes among their rocks, where they have only fish to eat; the barbarous Russians, buried in winter and snow; Prussia for the trade facilities of the Vistula; and Austria because she is greedy of everything.

The armies of the Continent have swept across Poland. It is the highway that leads to war.

Here on our estate and southward to the

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boundaries of Little Poland, there is not now such devastation and ruin. Perhaps it is because spring is here and I do not see it. With the spring there comes a sensation of expectation. Is it merely the unrest that beautiful things bring? I do not know. It seems to me that it is stronger this year than usual; that all Poland feels it; that Poland is waiting for something. It is the feeling I have in the Grand National Theater in Warsaw, before the curtain goes up on a new tragedy. Perhaps that is what Poland is waiting for now — the curtain to go up on a new world-tragedy, whose stage is to be our country or Russia, and the chief actor the French Colossus.

June 20, 1806. Spring makes my heart glad, and for the silliest reason. I fancy that the dead of the Massacre of Praga are not so miserable and are a little happy. Is not spring a sort of forgiveness?

In the nights of winter, when the wind

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and the white snow sweep down from the north, I suffer torments. The wind mimics and multiplies their cries of agony, their pain. I lie awake and listen and tremble.

At the time of the massacre I was a child. We were in Warsaw at our town house, which is situated near the suburb of Praga. The windows were shattered by the musketry. To save our lives we hid in the cellar — men, women, children, servants — an entire day. At night, when we crept back to our chambers in the upper story, every breath of wind brought the groans of the dying. The air was sickening and thick with dust and smoke and the scent of blood. Nine thousand Poles lay dead upon the field, slain by that Russian butcher, Suwarow.

When the news reached Petersburg, the people rushed into the streets and shouted: “If Suwarow is with us, who can be against us!” Was not that blasphemy such as God

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is sure to punish! Then we named Yek-Katarina¹ "The Fury of the North."

What will eventually become of Poland? Who next will be greedy of it? I have a presentiment — which I dare not whisper to any one — that in years to come it will be only a name, a great and glorious name, that signifies, in a world whose patriotism and fineness commercialism has dulled, the impossible dream of freedom.

June 30, 1806. My honored mother came to me this morning and broached the subject of my marriage. Since I had heard nothing for several days, I hoped it had been laid aside for the present.

"You are past your twenty-first birthday, an age when girls of your rank have been married three years. Soon you will be an

¹ Great Catherine. In the middle of the Eighteenth Century the Russians called Catherine II. *Yek-Katarina*, which is equivalent in English to Arch-Catherine.

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old maid. Have you no interest in the matter?"

"I hoped you would permit me to enjoy myself in the country. It may be the last summer that I shall be at home," I ventured.

Here my honored mother brushed away a tear, but soon returned valiantly to the subject.

"You have read too much. You want a story-book life."

"That is not it. I do not want to marry until — "

"Until what?"

"It is settled."

"What is settled?"

"The fate of Poland."

"What have you to do with that?"

"Nothing; but I feel that I might do something. There is in me the power to do something — "

"And you are going to sit and waste your youth for that? Marry, raise up sons for Poland! That's the thing to do!"

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"I do not wish to offend you, my honored mother, but I wish you would drop the subject until late summer — "

"Look at your friends — how well they are married! There is the Countess of Tisenhaus, who has married a Frenchman of birth, a peer of the realm, Count de Choiseul-Gouffier. Anna Tyskiewicz has become Countess Potocka; Princess Czartoryska has married the Prince of Wirtemberg; Anna Lapouschkine, by her marriage with Prince Paul Gavrilowitsch Gagarin, is one of the beauties of the Court of Russia. I should think you would want to play a part in the world! Do you not owe it to your family?" exclaimed my honored mother in such exasperation that she was unable to continue the discussion. This is the way these scenes end. They grieve me and vex her. And what good comes of them?

July 5, 1806. My honored mother has submitted to me a list of names which have

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received her approval and that of my honored father and grandfather. This is merely a conciliatory formality. They will choose whom they please. Since I have met none of them and know only their families, it makes little difference. The thing nearest my heart is that the marriage be deferred. Therefore I considered those at a distance from Warsaw. I picked up the list, read it through with a show of interest, and checked Count Krasinski¹ and Prince Adam Czartoryisky; the former is in Paris, and the latter is attached to the Court of Russia. The names pleased my honored mother. There are none nobler in Poland. Peace is restored — for a time.

July 10, 1806. Yesterday we attended a reception in Warsaw given by the Countess Stanilas Potocka for her new daughter, the

¹ Krasinski—Count Sigismund, a Polish writer best known as the author of *Irydion*, which, under the thin covering of a fable, tells the tragic story of Poland. He was a prominent figure in the Paris of that day.

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Countess Anna. My honored mother was in high spirits because of my apparent acquiescence to her plans, and happily pictured me settled more splendidly than is the Countess Anna.

The Countess Anna, while not pretty, is charming and girlish. She told us about the country place which is being built for her outside of Warsaw. She has named it Natoline. The old Count Stanilas Potocki — who is now in ill-health because of years of exposure endured in the Ukraine — is helping with the decorative scheme. He is a great connoisseur of art. They say his taste is respected abroad. His art gallery is the finest in Poland, except that owned by the Czartoryisky — the Prince General — in the “Blue Palace.”

While he was escorting the ladies, my honored mother and myself among the number, through the hall where the pictures are hung, I made an unfortunate remark for which my honored mother reprimanded me

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severely. We came to a picture, purchased recently (I cannot remember the Italian painter's name), which has caused comment. It represents a band of horsemen going at full speed through the streets of an ancient city. They come to a river bridged only by one board. Across this foaming chasm beckons an impossibly beautiful sprite, half-hidden in whose enveloping gauzes is a skeleton, the symbol of death. The skeleton holds out a crown.

"Ah!" I exclaimed, "above that fleeting phantom, whose possession is death, should be written Poland."

There was a dreadful hush. Eyes looked into eyes. Every one knows that with his Cossack warriors of the Ukraine Count Stanilas wanted to wrest the crown from the Commonwealth.

It is the talk in Warsaw, too, that negotiations are going forward for my marriage with a Czartoryisky, who likewise coveted the crown of Poland.

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I wonder if I have an unfortunate tongue!
I must remember not to say everything I think.

Countess Waleweska was present. She wore a red velvet dress. She did not look so well as usual. We are called the two prettiest women in Warsaw. She is tall and blond; that is why the red did not become her. I am plump and petite, with dark eyes, dark skin, and blond hair.

Later I forgot my chagrin. I met Pan Kasimir Brodzinski.¹ He is entertaining. He has written some interesting things of late, too, about Polish literature. At once I asked him, "Why are there never any new Polish novels? We stopped on our way at a book-seller's to get something to take back to Mioduschweski. Is no one doing anything?"

"Unfortunately that is the case, Countess Tatjana."

¹ Pan Kasimir Brodzinski, Polish critic.

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"The only Polish novel I found was *Valeria*, by Baroness Kriidener."

"Your honored mother will object to that, Countess Tatjana."

"Why, Pan Brodzinski?"

"It is a *chronique scandaleuse* of the writer's life in Venice and Copenhagen."

"I found the last volume of Walter Scott. They say Her Imperial Majesty, the Empress, reads nothing else. You will laugh when I tell you that I bought two books just for the interest they have aroused in the Great Napoleon—*Corinne* and *Werther* — which he has carried with him for months at a time."

Here Pan Brodzinski leaned forward and his face became eloquent:

"Let me tell you something: the writer of that book, Goethe, and Napoleon, and an Englishman whom you have not read — Byron — rule the minds of the age. The entire civilized world is in raptures over them. Do you know, a friend of mine

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lately returned from Russia told me that Russian soldiers stationed in the lonely regions of the Caucasus are learning the English language just to read Byron."

Just as I was getting ready to ask Pan Brodzinski the latest news of the Grande Armée, our hostess summoned us to the drawing-room to hear some recitations by Adam Mickiewicz.¹ He is a remarkable child — not more than seven and he declaims like an orator. The strange part about it is he will give only Polish pieces. Nor indeed will he answer if you address him in French. The Mickiewicz belong to the old *schlachta* (nobility) of Lithuania. I have seen their ancestral home. It is like the palace of a king.

¹ One of the greatest poets of Poland. His poems, ballads and his sonnets — in which he pictures the Crimea and the mountain world of Southern Russia — have been translated into the languages of the Continent. He is numbered among the Polish patriots of 1830.

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July 11, 1806. The post horn awoke us, blowing furiously. We jumped up and dressed without crossing ourselves or saying a "Hail Mary."

In the yard was a messenger from Warsaw to tell us that Napoleon had defeated the English in Italy and was striding northward like a giant in seven-league boots. I wonder what he is like, this world-hero who is writing his name in blood across the face of Europe. They say that he is handsome. Heroes, of course, are always handsome.

July 18, 1806. My honored grandfather, who is eighty and an adherent of our ancient customs, came in this morning while I was reading a French book to my sister Mischa. He flew into a rage because I was not reading Polish.

He is worth seeing. He attracts attention on the streets of Warsaw. He still wears the *zupan* and the *kontusch*, and when he goes abroad, the *burka* fastened across his breast

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with silver clasps whereon are the arms of the Tschaski.

“You are just like the rest!” he exclaimed, but in so grieved a tone that my heart went out to him. “And I hoped better things of you! There are no more Poles in Poland! We are a French race now. We speak French, read French, follow French modes in thought and dress. When you enter the home of a person of rank, it is as if you entered a drawing-room in the Faubourg St. Germain. There is nothing to be seen that is characteristic of us. It is right that we should cease to be a nation when we have ceased to be ourselves.

“Why do not the Germans dress like the Italians, or the Spaniards like the Russians? Would it not be just as reasonable? In the houses of fashion we see the same gilt furniture upholstered in silk, the same mirrors in frames of decorated Saxon porcelain, a profusion of frail ornaments made of china, tables inlaid with marble or bordered with

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delicate plaques of Sèvres, picture galleries, tapestries, silk-hung walls — all the things that create effeminacy and a luxurious forgetfulness."

I could not answer, because I know that it is true. Yet why should we not love beautiful things! Is it our duty to live in huts in the wild forests of Lithuania just because we are Poles and belong to the North?

July 26, 1806. Things are in a sad state. Everywhere uncertainty, indecision. Here no one dares do anything. Some are under the protection of Austria; some under the protection of Russia; others found their hope on France, and others vacillate in indecision. Was there ever such a state of things! Truly *Polonia confusione regitur*.

August 6, 1806. At dinner last night, my honored grandfather regaled us with stories

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of his youth. He was in Paris at the time of the second "partition."

One night at a *soirée* some one said: "How it will grieve the Poles to see their country cut up again! What will they do?"

Quickly the answer came: "Give balls and masquerades in Warsaw. When I think of Poland, I know that they are dancing — always dancing in Warsaw."

I do not know why I write this, or why it impressed me so. If the French were the best dancers in Europe, would they not be proud of it too? They are jealous. We are more French than they.

August 17, 1806. My new frocks have come from Paris. I am glad that my honored grandfather was not present when they were unpacked. There are a number of gauze ball dresses made with shirred overskirts caught up with little flowers, and several *robes rondes*. They are the *dernier cri* of fashion.

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August 27, 1806. I have had a splendid day. Pan Anton Malzweski¹ called. It has rained for a week, and we have had no guests. I was so glad to see him I greeted him in the Polish manner: "Praised be Jesus, the Christ."

He answered quickly in that impulsive way I like: "In all eternity."

We are of an age and great friends. He has been everywhere and seen everything. He has seen Prince Adam Czartoryisky in Imperial Russia. He told me all sorts of things about him. He is one of the most notable figures in the court set and the desire of all the ladies.

In the course of the afternoon, when we were quite alone, he confided to me his ambition. What do you suppose it is? To be a poet! I gravely answered: "All Poles are poets."

"But I am going to be a great one in the

¹ Polish poet who wrote *Maria, An Heroic Tale of the Ukraine.*

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English manner. As soon as the wars are over and I have time, I am going to set to work. It was Lord Byron who discovered to me my talent. The name of the first book is chosen: *Maria, An Heroic Tale of the Ukraine*. In it there is to be a song — partly written down now — called *The Carnival of Venice*, which is what Byron and I thought of the Venetian nights."

He talked with such fury, such disconnected haste, that I could only gasp: "You have seen Lord Byron!"

"Yes, and I gave him the subject for a poem — *Mazepa* — which will be translated for us."

September 5, 1806. We have just heard that the Grande Armée has crossed the borders of Prussia. Prussia tried to put herself on a war footing secretly. In return, Napoleon has seized Wesel, a fortress by the Rhine. Is he so near, and we did not know?

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September 11, 1806. The harvest is under way. The fields are dotted with grain stacks that are for all the world like round towers. I look at them and dream of Napoleon and the fortress by the Rhine. Could anything be sillier!

September 21, 1806. My honored grandfather had company to-day. Count Severin Rzewuski, Count Stanilas Potocki, and the Prince General. The Prince General is feeble and ill, although he conceals it bravely. He still keeps up the elegant courtly life he knew in his youth, although it is evident he cannot last long. Every one says that he will die some night at the card-table, dressed in the stiff, formal evening dress of a century ago, his courtiers gathered about him.

Little was talked of save the political situation. We are upon the eve of world-changing events. There is evident the ominousness that precedes the storm. The old gentlemen talked freely. They are of



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one political faith and have deeply at heart
the welfare of Poland.

It must have been a great life that was lived in their youth. The Prince General says that there will never be anything to equal the old aristocracy of Poland. Their life was the most sumptuous and luxurious in Europe. Mischa and I listened. It was like a romance. Count Rzewuski says that it is our own fault that we are where we are to-day. In the old days each was too great to acknowledge a greater.

"You are right," replied Count Potocki. "He who will not obey his own king will be forced to obey the king of others. 'After feasting follows fasting.' "

Our grandparents tell only of wars and bloodshed. In other countries, I wonder, are there other memories?

October 6, 1806. Napoleon is in Prussia. Terrible things are happening. We do not know just what, because little news reaches us.

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October 12, 1806. The excitement in Warsaw cannot be imagined. Every few hours a messenger arrives with a blowing of trumpets. Why should not we tremble when the Czar of Imperial Russia trembles on his throne?

Yet Warsaw rejoices — *and dances.*

October 18, 1806. My engagement to Prince Adam Czartorysky has been announced. I had no word in the matter; I was not consulted.

I have received a letter from Prince Adam and as betrothal gift a *kanak* — an antique Polish necklace of wrought silver set with round disks of ivory upon each of which is carved an eagle — the white eagle of Poland. I ought to be proud and happy. Prince Adam is Minister of Foreign Affairs at the Court of Russia. My honored mother says that my position will be better than that of the Countess Anna Potocka.

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October 25, 1806. Last night there was a celebration at the Prince General's in the "Blue Palace," in honor of my betrothal to his son Prince Adam. Prince Adam could not be present. He was represented by his dearest friend, M. Novosiltzow, likewise attaché of the Russian Court.

He brought with him a gift from His Imperial Master, a miniature of the Empress Elizabeth surrounded with diamonds and strung upon blue riband. M. Novosiltzow attached it to my shoulder in the presence of the guests. I am now a *dame de la portrait*.

We made merry in the good old Polish way. First we danced the Polonaise, going through nearly every room in the house and up and down all the stairs. Then the Prince General made a speech, as was the custom in his youth, at the end of the Polonaise. Next, toasts were called for. Mine was drunk from one of my jeweled slippers, which every one present declared to be smaller and shapelier than those worn by

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the Archduchess of Austria, Marie Louise, who has the prettiest foot in Europe. It was splendid and solemn, but some way my heart was not in it. My honored mother, however, was gay and happy enough for two. I kept thinking — I wonder if outside through the night he is marching toward Warsaw, *the man who has the face of an antique god.*

October 12, 1806. The expected has happened. There has been a terrible battle at Jena. Prince Louis fell. A new sun has risen over Europe. Napoleon is master of Berlin, and Queen Louise is kneeling at the feet of a soldier of fortune. I wonder if he is greater than all other men, or if it is only that he knows one game better — the game of war. He moves armies as if they were pawns upon a chess-board.

November 12, 1806. Autumn is upon us. The harvest has left the fields bare and brown. In the poplars there is a shiver that tells of winter. The leaves are a faded

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yellow, which is the color of the things of yesterday. To-morrow we go to Warsaw for the winter.

November 25, 1806. St. Catherine's day. This was to have been my wedding-day. St. Catherine is the patroness of happy marriages. It is altogether impossible for Prince Adam to leave Russia. The only hope of Polish freedom is his friendship with the Emperor. Now is a momentous time. He must be at his ear to estimate his moods, that he may whisper at the propitious moment, *memento Poloniae!* He writes: "We Poles who have lost the right to fight upon the field of battle, must, as a last necessity, resort to the coward's weapons — cajolery and diplomacy."

November 27, 1806. Napoleon is in Posen!

December 18, 1806. I received a letter from Prince Adam to-day which brings us nearer together than any he has written

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before. He has taken me into his confidence. He has a plan for saving Poland. It is this; to use his influence with the Emperor to bring about a defensive union of Russia and England, each of which alone is strong enough to check the advance of France. Then it will be to the advantage of each that Poland be independent, the future's formidable barrier against continental aggression.

"I shall make Alexander see," he writes, "that the partition of Poland was foolish."

This is the object of his life. For this he is sacrificing his youth and his happiness at the Court of Russia.

My honored mother says, in case he succeeds, a king will be chosen for Poland, and it is sure to be either Prince Adam or Prince Poniatowski.

Nothing can make me believe that personal motives enter into his ambition. He is the most disinterested of men. All this time that he has been Minister of Foreign Affairs for Russia, he has received no salary.

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He refused to accept money, orders, or insignia of rank from the nation that oppressed his race. He said that he considered it his duty to free Poland, since it was his own family, the Czartoryisky, who in ancient days first invited the Russians into the country.

He has no faith in Napoleon. He hates him. It is his desire to be the instrument of his downfall. He writes: "Napoleon is the scourge of Europe. It is the duty of nations to unite and make an end of him."

As for Poland, no time is to be lost, because the nature of Alexander is undergoing a change. He no longer has Utopian dreams of presenting nations with their freedom. As far as his weak nature will permit, he is being Russianized. Now, when the subject of Poland is mentioned, there must be some other object — and that for Russia's good.

Then he wrote of life and people in St. Petersburg. He went to the first night of the new opera, *Il Barbiere di Seviglia*. It was

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written by Signor Paisiello, a protégé of the Great Catherine.

There has been a new play brought out by a Russian at Knipper's Theater — *Roslaw* by Kniazin. Prince Adam did not care for it. However, as soon as it is put on sale at Glosunow's, he will send me a copy that I may judge for myself.

December 21, 1806. Napoleon is in Warsaw! The joy of the people is beyond description. It must have been like this when our own king, Jan Sobieski, returned with conquering arms. We have greeted him as if our freedom were assured. But he has said nothing. He has made no promises.

The streets are gay with colors. Side by side are the gold eagle of France and the white eagle of Poland. The soldiers are banqueted everywhere. The people have gone mad and dance and sing without knowing why.

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January 5, 1807. We have not given Napoleon a chance to ask for soldiers. They are rushing to him in such numbers it is as if the nation threw itself at his feet and cried: "*With the forehead! With the forehead!*"

Prince Poniatowski has raised a legion. Yesterday the consecration of their arms took place in Zielony Plac. When I looked at the youths kneeling at the altar, it seemed to me not a Christian consecration, but a pagan sacrifice of blood in honor of the modern Moloch — Napoleon.

January 9, 1807. My honored grandfather has returned from inspecting the French troops. He says that, in comparison with them, our old armies looked like a merrymaking at a country fair.

January 11, 1807. I have met Napoleon!
It was last night. I am still so excited that I do not know how to tell about it. The

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ladies of Warsaw have been vexed that he did not arrange for a presentation. Yesterday the invitation came. At nine-thirty we were assembled. We waited a full hour, standing in nervous expectation. At last the door by which we knew he would enter opened, and Talleyrand appeared. It seemed minutes before he spoke. Then he bowed and announced — “The Emperor!” The word had the voice of the thunders and filled all space. I can hear it now. “*The Emperor!!*”

He looked like a god who in haste had been made a man and made too small. By some accident his eyes met mine. For an instant it was as if we two were alone, unconscious of the crowd that swayed between.

As the ladies filed past and were presented, I felt that he was waiting for me. Then a terrible nervousness seized me, which expressed itself in a sort of exaltation, a wild and reckless daring.

When my turn came, he stepped forward

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eagerly and asked my name. "The Countess Tatjana Tschaska."

He beckoned me to him. "I am sure now that I shall meet in Poland the only ruler whom I fear."

"And whom may that be, Sire?"

"The Queen of Beauty," bowing gallantly.

I retorted: "One of our Slav poets said long ago: 'One need not fear a Russian Czar so greatly as a Polish woman.'" Then I courtesied and moved on.

As soon as the presentations were over, I saw him making his way toward me. On the instant I was the observed of all. The crowd fell back, seeing that it was his will, and left us alone. I was conscious of a sensation then which I hope will never be repeated in the course of my life. It was as if upon the instant all my ideals, all my standards of living, had been shattered. It was as if I had never lived before. It is in such moods that we do things that we regret and wonder at ever after. There was some-

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thing within me that rushed to meet him, that swept barriers before it. Outwardly, however, I was calm.

When he came near enough to speak, he asked jestingly: "Are there really none but nobles in Poland?"

In an instant I was on my mettle, defiant and scornful. "Sire, it is easier to be a sovereign prince in France than a petty noble in Poland." Then I read such admiration in his eyes I regretted the answer and hastened to make amends by inquiring, somewhat awkwardly: "Are you not homesick for Paris, here in the North?"

"How could I be, when in Warsaw I have found another and a gayer Paris?"

"Why is it that it fascinates the foreigner so?"

"Because here the East and the West meet. The streets — how interesting — a scene from an opera; turbanned Mussulmans, Janizaries, Hungarians, Russians in pointed caps, Poles, Tartars — "

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“And what of the people — people such as are here?”

“I do not care so much for the men, but I never saw such pretty women. In them, too, the East and the West meet. They unite the intelligence, the fine presence of the West with the fire and the languor of the East.”

I do not know what else we said. We talked with merriment and unrestraint. Then he bowed, spoke a few words with some of the others, and retired. He has gray-blue eyes that deepen and darken when he talks. He is very small for a man, but so exquisitely proportioned that he gives the impression of stateliness and height. His voice is beautiful. It makes the heart vibrate.

January 12, 1807. To-day the Emperor sent one of his aides to inquire for my health and to bring me a book — *Comte de Comminges*. An enclosed note says that

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this is his favorite book and that every time he reads it he weeps. Strange man who can see his fellows slaughtered by thousands, and weep over the mimic passions of a book!

January 14, 1807. At the Assembly last night, I was commanded to the Emperor's whist table. No sooner had I sat down than he turned to me with the greatest unrestraint of manner. "What stakes shall we play for, my little Countess?"

"When one plays with the King of the World, Sire, it should be for nothing less than a kingdom."

"Well, then, what shall it be? Name it!"

"The freedom of Poland, Sire."

You cannot imagine the consternation. Every one was so frightened that I began to be frightened, too. He was not in the least vexed. No one knows better how to value bravery.

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“Granted, my little Countess! And I will play for the heart of the bravest of Polish women.”

Then the game began. I cannot tell how furiously we played. It was as if the fate of the world hung in the balance. I never lived such an exciting hour. People crowded around to learn the result. Bets were made. Excitement rose to fever heat. I lost. He leaned across the table and grasped my hands. “Now you are mine. I have won you fairly, you little rebel!”

Then some one cried out,—Prince Murat I think it was: “Sire, I never thought to see you grasp the hand of Russia.”

“What do you mean?” was the somewhat startled answer.

“The Countess Tatjana, Sire, is the affianced bride of Prince Adam Czartoryisky, the real ruler of Imperial Russia.”

“It is my custom always to defeat my enemies,” he answered, but I saw that his face clouded.

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“Wait!” I exclaimed. “Prince Adam and I may yet defeat you!”

January 20, 1807. In a letter received from Prince Adam to-day was this sentence: “Do not trust the French Emperor. He will deceive the Poles. He will make them promises he has no idea of keeping, and in return they will shed their blood for him by thousands. The people of the South, remember, are light of tongue.”

January 26, 1807. Warsaw is still wild over the Emperor. He possesses a strange magnetism. It is as if, like Prometheus, he had stolen the fire of the gods. He is mortal. It cannot last. I wonder if, like Prometheus, he will atone for his temerity by being chained to a rock in the sea that the vultures of envy may eat his heart!

January 30, 1807. Again last night I was commanded to the Emperor's whist table. He had forgotten about our little unpleasant-

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ness and was unfeignedly glad to see me. As I entered, he was talking with the Prince General about Goethe, whom he met in Weimar. The Prince General moved away to make place for the players, and the Duke of Bassano came up.

"I must quote for our little Countess, Duke, that saying of Goethe's which proves him to be a warrior like myself: 'Women and fortresses were made to storm and take.'"

"When Goethe wrote that, Sire," I answered, "two exceptions were understood — Russian fortresses and Polish women."

Then you should have heard the laughter, which he took good-naturedly, replying: "I like spirit in a woman. It indicates race."

After the game was over, we found ourselves alone. He insisted upon driving me home. We managed it without the others knowing; otherwise I should not have dared. When we were in the sleigh he said, as if he

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thought I would be greatly interested: "I am going away to-morrow — or the next day, my little Countess."

"Where, Sire?"

"To White Russia."

I started as if some terrible thing had been communicated to me, then replied: "Do not seek the wind in the open field."¹

The answer did not please him. Some minutes passed before he spoke. Then the conversation took an intimate turn. We drove for two hours at a furious pace, the horses' feet striking diamonds from the snow. When we reached the white levels of the country, silent and cold in the silver night, I suddenly realized that in the nature of the man beside me were the same great spaces of cold and silence — like the steppe — which nothing could reclaim. For a moment fear rose in my heart.

He said a thousand fond and foolish things and at last asked me if I loved him.

¹ Slav proverb.

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I replied: "One worships the gods, Sire; one does not love them."

When we reached home and got out of the sleigh, he stood looking at me in silence. His face looked paler than usual and more stern. Suddenly a sort of rage convulsed it. He drew me to him, held me close, and kissed my hair again and again. Then he leaped into the sleigh and was off without a word. For an instant the stars in the winter sky and the sparkling snow-stars upon the earth were one. A noise as of whirling waters dulled my ears. In love as in war he is fierce and furious.

February 10, 1807. There has been another battle. We do not know much about it, except that it must have been in the neighborhood of Eylau. I have not heard from Prince Adam. I wonder if he was there. I fancied him on one side and Napoleon on the other, with the black thundering cannon between.

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February 14, 1807. Every day comes news of an engagement in which the French are successful. To-day a messenger came to me from the seat of war, bringing a small box. In it there was an ornament of diamonds, with a slip of paper, upon which was written: "Russian fortresses may be taken!"

February 19, 1807. The French have defeated the Russians at Ostrolenko.

February 27, 1807. Despite the war and the sad news that reaches us daily, the carnival has been merry. We do always dance in Warsaw. There is no denying it.

Last night being Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, we celebrated at the Prince General's in the good old-fashioned way. We wore the Polish costume in compliance with the Prince General's request. The ladies were resplendent in antique flowered court gowns of old English gilt-brocade; the gentlemen in gorgeous uniforms with all

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their decorations, long blue and white plumes
tossing from their hats.

We began by dancing the Kracoviak, each with a glass of wine in his hand. At the turns of the dance, where the ladies whirl, half kneeling, and their full skirts spread out around them like the petals of a flower, each gentleman made the sign of the cross above his partner's head with a glass of glowing wine. Then came a gavotte, then a Polonaise, and last the old-fashioned dance where we sing, "Oh, we love one another, yes, we love one another!" Thus we kept it up without once pausing. At midnight the Prince General's chaplain entered and made a little talk upon the necessity of keeping the fast days. We followed him to the chapel, where mass was said. When he came to the place in the service where he reads, "*Cum jejunatis nolite fieri sicut Pharisæi,*" the men leaped to their feet, flashed their swords from jeweled scabbards, and set their plumed hats high upon their heads

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to signify that they would fight and die for the faith. It was a splendid and imposing sight — those solemn courtly figures glittering with gems and gold, under the fretful light of tapers in the pale winter dawn. I shall not soon forget it.

April 20, 1807. This has been a sad Lent, a veritable season of gloom. I do not know why. I have heard nothing from the Emperor.

MIODUSCHWESKI,
NEAR WARSAW ON THE VISTULA.

June 1, 1807. Spring is here. Even spring is sad. Not even the birds are merry. Our peasants have sung their saddest songs at the planting. I have heard nothing from the Emperor.

July 10, 1807. The Peace of Tilsit has been signed. Prince Adam was there. France won her point, made alliance with Russia and left England out. Prince Adam is

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broken-hearted. Had Alexander been less weak, Poland would be free. An attempt to influence the mind of Alexander is like writing one's name on water. There is a Russian proverb that says, however: "You must not expect a cuckoo to be a falcon."

How discouraging has this long diplomatic battle been to Prince Adam! To it he has sacrificed his youth. Alexander has made use of his talent for ten years by luring him on with the hope of a free Poland. He says that at the Peace of Tilsit Napoleon jested and made all manner of fun of the Poles. Since he is no longer the champion of the people, he has degenerated into an ambitious knave, to whom the god of luck gave a touch of genius.

"Napoleon," he writes, "is not a man of knightly honor with the blood of kings in his veins. He is merely an adventurous usurper eager for power. He is the first exponent of a modern commercial world whose dawn is just at hand — a world

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wherein everything will be negotiable, everything will have its price. The chivalric spirit of the past will exist no longer; nothing comparable will exist again after the sword of Napoleon has passed over it."

(Here the loss of a number of leaves from the diary causes an interruption in the story. It is taken up again with the year 1812).

ZAOZAIMA, NEAR WILNA IN LITHUANIA.

June 15, 1812. I have just reached Zaozaima to oversee for the summer one of our Lithuanian estates. My honored mother was unable to come.

I received a letter from Prince Adam to-day. He is no longer Minister of Foreign Affairs, but he still stays on at the Court of Russia because of his influence and friendship with Alexander. He still hopes to effect the freedom of Poland. And I am waiting. How many women are there in Poland to-day whose fate, like mine, is bound up with the fate of the nation!

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June 27, 1812. A messenger just came post-haste from Prince Adam with this letter: "By the time this reaches you, Napoleon will have crossed the Niemen with the great army of France. Diplomatic relations, as you know, have been severed between France and Russia. Again I have hope of the old alliance of Russia and England.

"Word has been sent to Napoleon that you are in Zaozaima in Lithuania, on the direct route to Russia. His love for you is well known. He will send you word. You can help us. While I have the ear of Alexander and you the heart of Napoleon, something may yet be done for Poland. This is the plan — not to let Napoleon see the army of Russia until after he has left Wilna. When he does see it, it will feign fear and retreat. In case an engagement cannot be avoided, it is our plan to give him the victory and then retreat again. In this way we can bring him into the heart of the country.

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With you to help, we will lure Napoleon, who is now drunk with success, to a banquet of death in the heart of White Russia."

July 18, 1812. A messenger came from the Emperor to-day and an escort of Lithuanian soldiers. I am commanded to go to Witepsk to the Convent of Our Lady of Good Council and there await him. I did not think it would come so soon.

July 20, 1812. All night we rode through the great pine woods of Lithuania. The soldiers sang, alternately, with answering voices, one of the strangely modulated *dainos* of the country:

"But when shall we go from the Russian land
Back again to the Memel strand?
When posts and stones to blossom are seen
And trees in depth of the sea grow green."¹

Poor fellows! There is little probability that they will come back to the Memel.

¹ Author's translation.

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July 25, 1812. Witepsk is a gloomy city filled with cloisters. There are twenty-four here. They look as black and as forbidding as the black pines of Lithuania.

July 27, 1812. I found the strangest manuscript in the convent to-day! It is unsigned and ancient. No one knows of its origin. I copy a part which mysteriously refers to the present:

“For I say unto you that the balance must always be kept. Great things will be weighed and estimated by great things. But in the end that shall prevail that is fullest of joy. Joy, alone, is life. Joy, alone, can create. That which is effort is of a baser fiber.

“Out of the gloom and the fog of the North the barbarians came and destroyed the land of joy, the cities of white marble, the gladness of the pagan world. They destroyed the altars whereon the incense smoked and the sacrificial doves slumbered.

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"In the ages of ages, when the time shall be ripe and the world shall have forgotten its ancient joy, retribution will fall upon the North.

"Out of the South will come a Cæsar and a god, who, like them of old, shall know not fear, but joy. He will be wise with the wisdom of the sleeping centuries. He will be a Bacchic god, in whose honor for incense cities will burn and the smoking blood of slaughtered nations rise. He will be a Titan, who believes that the only crime is littleness and impotence. A new age will begin with him."

As I read I saw the white cameo-like face of the Great Emperor framed in the gold of a burning city.

July 29, 1812. The Emperor came yesterday. He brought two suits such as are worn by the Polish cavalry, one for me and one for my *dame de compagnon*. I had to cut my hair. Now it is in little yellow curls. He

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said I must look like the women who lead
the armies of the Great Catherine.

We are on the road to Moscow.

July 30, 1812. What is so inspiring as the
call of trumpets! They are the instrument
of courage and high deeds.

July 31, 1812. Pan Brodzinski, Pan
Anton Malzweski, and Prince Michael Rad-
ziwill are with the army. I have not seen
them.

August 1, 1812. This army is a wonderful
sight. In it are people of all nations. The
faith of the soldiers in Napoleon is fanatical.
In just this way do the Moslems worship
Allah. They think he is superior to death.
As the days go by and I learn to estimate
his power, I, too, can say "*Allah il Allah.*"

August 10, 1812. No mortal was ever
adored like this. Surely there must be good
in his heart.

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August 11, 1812. It is just as Prince Adam wrote. The Russians feign fear and retreat. I cannot be a party to this murder, this luring him on to death. I must find some means of escape. I must find some means of saving him that will save Poland too.

August 12, 1812. Napoleon disguised himself as a chasseur and we rode together all day. I made the most of the opportunity.

“Sire, before we reach the boundaries of Old Poland, I pray you, take this precaution for your safety — make Poland free. Then you will have a safe ally behind you. Then you can conquer Russia.”

“Why take the trouble! Do you not see how they fear me, how they retreat?”

“That is only a ruse, Sire; they are the subtlest of races.”

“They fear me; that is why.”

“No, Sire, I know them better. It is a ruse. I beg you to listen and be not angry.

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Only a man whom the too great favors of destiny had made drunk would lead an army into the heart of Russia. It means death — to them — to you."

"That is for cowards. *Audaces Fortuna juvat, timidosque repellit.*"

"Sire, make Poland free!"

"If I did, what good would it do the Poles? They could not remain free."

"Why, Sire! Do you not admire my race?"

"I admire them, but I do not respect them. Your Polish aristocracy has received a foreign education. In art, in letters, they have become *demi-savants*, which has un-fitted them for practical affairs. No people were ever more fitted to please. No people ever so loved the joy of life — music and the tossing of plumes. *But* — no people ever had so little talent for the conquest of life. They were not made for care, work, for a commonplace thing like discipline. That is why they are famous for their cav-

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alry. They are good only for the impetuous rush of an inspired moment."

"Sire, make an end to this crucifixion of my country! It will mean safety to you on your return. *Make Poland free!*"

"It would be useless. You Poles have no genius for affairs. You have always acted like children."

"Sire, we are grown now. Sorrow has made us wise."

"It is useless, I tell you. You do not belong to the present. You belong to other centuries. You are the last defenders of the bulwark of the Middle Ages, where chivalry ruled. Now a modern world is here that does not care for things that are merely fine; an age without ideals but with great practical sense; an age which money and success alone can rule,—money and success, won at any price, for not even honor will stand in the way. Soon the old chivalric days when men loved one another will be merely a dream.

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“The wars of the time to come will not be like these of mine. They will be bloodless wars fought at expense of men's souls and nerves, and they will be crueler and more deeply destructive than any that have desolated Poland.

“If I should make Poland free, it could not remain free. It is the age that is at fault. You have not grasped modern life. Another age has come over Europe. And because the Pole cannot accommodate himself to it, the nation will be destroyed. It will pass under the rule of others who have in abundance what he has not. *Polonia delenda est.*”

I can do no more. He must go on to ruin.
I dare not show him the letter of Prince Adam.

August 16, 1812. We are under the walls of Smolensk, the city which the Cossack Hetmans wrested from the Commonwealth. This is on the borders of Old Poland.

I said to the Emperor in one last attempt: “There is Russia, Sire. Do you remember

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how it looks upon the map? A wilderness bounded by a river of blood and by blue and frozen seas. Those, Sire, are God's awful prohibition."

He looked toward it thoughtfully for a time, then turned and walked silently away.

August 18, 1812. Yesterday the French took Smolensk. Again I saw the policy of Russia. It was garrisoned by thirty thousand men. They gave us the victory that Napoleon may push on into the heart of the country. There, when winter comes, the snow and the frost will do what arms can not. There he will contend with a new army — the army of the elements. I saw the battle. It was terrible beyond description. The Emperor commanded in person. He was here, there, everywhere, all at once. He was the incarnate demon of joy. Bullets dared not touch him. Screaming, they fled past. It was frightful in that he really seemed to be protected by a superhuman power.

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After it was over, he rode to where I sat.

"Was a woman ever entertained as I have entertained you? I do not amuse you with stupid balls, operas, soirées, but with the play of the best armies of Europe."

His joy filled me with terror.

August 20, 1812. The soldiers are wild with hope. They see themselves master of the East. I alone know what awaits them. They are uplifted by such a burning desire of the future that the present is annihilated.

Along the way are the dead and dying. No one seems to care.

August 22, 1812. I am becoming infected with the general joy. Yet I know that the Russians have prepared their revenge.

August 28, 1812. The Russians are still retreating. Yesterday and the day before there were slight engagements in which the French were successful.

The Russians retired to Borodino. Now

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the invincible Kutusow is in command. The Emperor is delighted. He is eager to meet him.

September 8, 1812. Yesterday they fought by Borodino. Kutusow retired to Moscow.

September 12, 1812. We can see Moscow!
Imagine a yellow, barren plain, over it gold-dust haze, brightening and darkening as the wind sways it, through which rise a multitude of green and red and blue and silver domes, surmounted by gold, lace-work crosses. It floats in the air. It is the creation of a magician. At the same time it is very real, and touched with mystery and age — the immemorial age of the East.

September 15, 1812. We are in Moscow. The city is deserted. Kutusow took his troops and went away. It was not fear that made him. Something terrible is going to happen. Why do not the French suspect?

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It is unimaginable — the effect of this silent, wonderful city. Who would dream of a city here — on the barren plain that stretches eastward to Asia! And such a city! Italian palaces by the side of Tartar huts! Bazaars where the wonders of the Orient are displayed!

The soldiers are pillaging right and left. Entire squadrons go about decked in gold and embroidered gauzes fit for the harems of Stamboul.

It is like a festival in honor of a pagan god. This illusion is heightened by the fires which are burning everywhere, like incense.

Never before did the bitter North see anything like this. Like this life must have been in the old days — in Alexandria and in Mitylene.

September 17, 1812. It has come! It could not be put off longer. Last night the Emperor summoned me to him. He was in the Uspenski Sobore, the cathedral where

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the Russian emperors are crowned. Here he has set up his abode. The splendor of the room I entered was overpowering. It was magnificent, imposing, glittering with marbles, with paintings, and with decorations, made out of barbaric gold. It was lighted by a thousand candles, each as tall as the body of a man. Yet the corners and the roof were black and impenetrable.

No sooner had I entered than he drew me to him with that silent fury I remembered. Then he hastened to make fast the door.

"Now I can unfold my plan—I, who am master of the world. For five years I have loved you and asked nothing in return. Now is my time. You are to be my Empress—Empress of the East. This shall be your capital, Russia and the Orient your crown lands. You shall be what Yek-Katarina dreamed always of being—Empress of the East."

"But—Sire—the church! Could it bless a union like ours?"

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“The church? Why, I shall be the church!”

I saw that he was drunk with the deadliest wine that can be given to mortals — success, and the too great favors of destiny.

“Sire, I have considered. I will follow your will — on one condition.”

Here some one knocked at the door.
“The city is on fire! Lose no time. Save yourself!”

“And what is that?” paying not the slightest heed to the interruption.

“Sire, Russia’s supply of powder is under the Kremlin. In an instant we may all be destroyed. Sire! Sire!”

“And what is that?”

The pounding on the door became deafening. The great windows were so lighted by the flames outside that they dimmed the candles. The floor, made of bricks of steel, was as red with the reflection as a sea of blood.

“The freedom of Poland, Sire.”

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“I grant it.”

“Why should you not? Poland was cut up to make presents for the lovers of Catherine. Why should it not be united for the one love of Napoleon?”

“Sire! Sire! Open the door. Do not risk your life — the fate of France. Open! Open!”

“Write then its freedom here,” snatching a piece of paper and spreading it before him.

I felt no fear. I was conscious only of a great exaltation, — the sensation he had first taught me to know. Death was nothing in comparison with the goal I sought.

“Write, Sire, write!”

We were then in such an intensity of many-colored light that the farthest top of the great dome shone red like a baker’s oven. The knocking and the voices increased, grew deafening.

“An instant, just another instant!” I prayed, “until that paper is in my hands!”

“Dictate; it shall be as you wish.”

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“Write, then: ‘que la République de Pologne soit maintenue dans son état de libre élection et qu'il ne soit permis à personne de rendre le dit royaume héréditaire dans sa famille ou de s'y rendre absolu.’”

Just as he reached the place of signature, the door fell and the Prince of Naples, followed by frightened soldiers, rushed in.

“What are you writing?” He snatched the paper from the table. By this time the room was half filled with soldiers.

The freedom of Poland!

“Sire, this woman is the tool of Russia. See, here is the letter written to her by Prince Adam Czartoryisky. Listen, Sire, listen!

“With you to help, we will lure Napoleon, who is now drunk with success, to a banquet of death in the heart of White Russia.”

The look on the face of the Great Emperor is one of the things which the merciful God will never permit me to forget. Upon it

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dawned in quick succession the intelligence of all those baffling defeats, followed by a mingled look of anger, surprise, and that which cut me deepest — grief.

“Sire,” continued the Prince of Naples, “outside waits her escort sent by His Imperial Majesty, Alexander, to rescue her from burning Moscow.”

“Take her to her escort,” was the stern reply.

Not one word, not one glance, did he give to me.

As I drove away toward Warsaw, I saw him for one last instant standing on the pictured Kremlin wall, fearless and calm, a pagan god for whom a city fell in ruin. Behind and beside, the conflagration rolled its waves of flame.

I had been faithful to my country, to my duty, yet I felt the greatest contempt for myself.

You see, I was beneath his anger.

THE PAINTER OF DEAD WOMEN

WE were lingering over one of our honeymoon breakfasts in Naples, my husband dividing his attention between *Il Corriere di Napoli* and his coffee, and I planning for my favorite pastime, swimming, in that sea which looks like a liquid sapphire.

“‘No clue to the mysterious disappearance of the Contessa Fabriani,’” he read. ‘After a month’s search, the police are baffled.’”

“That does not sound particularly remarkable to you, I suppose. Women — and men, too, for that matter — have disappeared from other cities. But this adds another chapter to a mysterious story of crime.

“For twenty-five years not only native Italian women, but visiting women of other nations have disappeared from Naples, and nothing has afterward been heard of them.

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The peculiar part about it is that they have all been young and beautiful, and women of the upper class."

I paid little heed to his words. I was thinking of other things. Besides, Luigi was a Neapolitan and interested in all the happenings of his native city. On my first visit to Naples I did not have time to interest myself in a sensational story such as I could read any morning in the London papers.

"You have not forgotten that to-night is the ball?" said my husband, consulting his watch and jumping up. "I want you to look particularly lovely. All my friends — and your old rivals — will be there. Business takes me from the city for the day, and in case I should not return in time to accompany you, I have arranged for Cousin Lucia to meet you at ten at the door of the Cinascalchi Palace. I shall come later — in time for part of the dancing. Tell Pietro to get you there at exactly ten," he called, after he had kissed me good-by.

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When I took a last look at myself in the glass that night, I felt that I had obeyed my husband's instructions. I was looking particularly lovely. I had dressed with the purpose of appearing as unlike Italian women as possible.

My slim six feet of stature was arrayed in a plain white satin princess, from which the shoulders rose scarcely less white and satiny. My hair was the color of the upland furze, and my cheeks glowed like the roses of an English garden.

"Pietro!" I called, after we had driven what seemed to me a very long time. "Are you sure that you are going in the right direction? I did not suppose that it was outside the city."

He reassured me and drove on.

We entered the courtyard of a country estate. As I stepped from the carriage, I saw in the distance the grouped lights of Naples. Pietro whipped the horses and drove off before I had time to speak.

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There were no other carriages in the yard. Could I have mistaken the time? Lucia was not there to meet me, either. "She is probably within," I reflected, "since the palace is bright with light."

Doors swung back softly and as if by magic. I entered. The blaze of light that rushed out all but blinded me. Words cannot express the horror of it nor the silence that accompanied it. There were no servants moving about. No one was in sight. I was alone.

Imagine a sweep of majestic rooms whose floors were polished to the surface consistency of stone; straight white walls of mirrored marble, and, blazing from walls and ceiling, prisms of cut crystal. Wherever you looked the glitter of light flashed back at you, confusing your eyes and dazing your brain. I did not suppose that light could hold such terror.

"There is surely some mistake," I whispered. "This is no place for dancing or merriment. It is more like a white and

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shining sepulchre. I would rather trust myself to the night outside," and I turned toward the door with the purpose of leaving. But the space behind, where I knew that I had entered, presented a smooth and evenly paneled surface. There was no door. Nor was there place for lock or knob. As I stood confused and hesitating, I learned to the full the demoniac power of light. The slightest motion of my body, my head, my breathing, even, sent from polished corners and cornice quivering arrows into my eyes. The mirrors and the shining marble reflected floor and ceiling until it was impossible to tell where one left off and the other began. It seemed, after a time, that I was floating head downward in a sea of light.

Then something righted me sharply. It was not sound nor was it thought. It appealed to subtler senses. It was as if the material body was endowed with a thinking machine and each pore contained a brain. It aroused some consciousness which the

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hypnotism of light had dulled. I knew then that I was standing, slim and white and frozen with terror, in the focus of the light.

I felt the cold diamonds shift their position upon my throat and breast and tremble as I breathed irregularly. I heard the sibilant slipping of the stiff satin as it fell into a changed position.

A powerful and dominant brain had touched my own. For one unconscious moment it had ruled it and set upon it the seal of its thought.

Such a passion of fear assailed me that it seemed as if I must choke. My fascinated eyes turned toward the end of the farthest room. From there the message came. There, I knew, was something compelling, something electric. Exactly in the center of that far room, and very erect, stood a man. He was coming toward me, too, slowly — very slowly. Yet I heard not the slightest sound. Evidently he was shod with rubber. He moved as I have seen a

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malevolent spider move toward a prisoned fly, enjoying the pleasure of motion because he knows that there is no escape for his victim. Just as gracefully and easily did he move toward me. And as he came, I knew that he read my soul, measured my strength and my power of resistance, and at the same time admired the white erectness of my body.

Fear, as with a bitter acid, etched his picture on my brain. He was very tall — taller than I by a good inch — and faultlessly attired; a patrician, but a degenerate patrician, the body alone having preserved its ancient dignity.

Ribboned decorations brightened his coat, and I saw a garter on his leg.

He was thinner than any one I ever saw and correspondingly supple. His movements had the fascination of a serpent. Thus might a serpent move, if its coiled length were poised erect.

His head would have been beautiful, had not the features been so delicately chiseled

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that strength and nobility had been refined away, and in their place had come effeminacy and a certain cold and delicate cruelty.

He was an old man, too, and his heavy hair was white. His brows, however, were black and youthful, and from beneath looked out blue eyes. The eyes were the color of light when it shines through thick ice. They were the color of the sharp edge of fine steel when it is bared too quickly to the sun. In the same hard way the light ran across them.

But the strangest part was that there seemed to be no limit to their depth. However far you looked within, you could not find a person. You could not surprise a consciousness. There was no soul there. In its stead there was merely a keen and destructive intelligence.

I realized that the man coming toward me did not live by means of the physical acts of life. He had learned to live by his brain. He was a cerebral!

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I sensed his dominant personality and struggled against it. I sensed, too, the presence of a numbing mental fluid that crippled my will and dulled me as does that sweet-smelling death which surgeons call the anæsthetic.

He had stripped himself of human attributes. He knew nothing of fear, pity, love.

“I have the honor of meeting, I believe, the bride of the Leopardi.” He bowed and spoke in an even, unemotional voice.

I bowed in return. “How is it possible for you to know that? I do not remember having met you.”

“It is not necessary to have met me. No beautiful woman comes to Naples whom I do not know. I,” bowing again, “am Count Ponteleone, painter of dead women. You have probably heard of me.”

“Who has not!” I exclaimed, somewhat reassured and wondering that this could be the man whose name was resounding through two continents.

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“This intrusion — which I beg you to pardon — is due to the coachman’s mistake. I am expected at the Cinascalchi ball. My husband and cousin await me there. If you will send me on in your carriage, I shall be grateful.”

“Oh, no, your coachman made no mistake,” calmly ignoring my request. “I brought him here and you, too, as I have brought other women — by this,” tapping his forehead.

“You are graciously jesting to excuse my rudeness,” I managed to stammer, summoning the ghost of a smile.

“Well, we may as well call it a jest if you wish. It is a jest which ought to flatter. I entertain only beautiful women here.”

The glance that accompanied this enveloped me from head to foot. It was a glance of admiration, and yet in it there was none of the desire of would-be love. It was devoid of warmth and emotion. Nothing could be more impersonal. No mark of material beauty had escaped it. It was the trained

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glance of a connoisseur which measures accurately. I might have been a picture or a piece of furniture.

I felt that he knew my racial standing, my rank as a human animal, by the delicate roundness of my bones and the fine fiber of my flesh. I had been as glass to his intelligent gaze. Somehow, then, I felt that the body of me belonged to him because of this masterly penetration which substance could not resist.

“Since you are to be my guest, we might seek a more comfortable place to converse.”

He led the way to the center of the great rooms where, touching an invisible spring, doors flew back, disclosing a drawing-room draped in red. As he bowed me to a seat, he remarked: “Here you look like a pearl dropped in a cup of blood.”

I, too, thought that I had never seen so wicked a red nor one so suggestive of luxurious crime. The comparison jarred upon me and prickled me with fear.

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As he sank back in an easy-chair opposite, I saw how the red walls touched with color the whiteness of his hair and sent occasional ruddy gleams into the depth of his eyes.

"You are an Englishwoman, too," he observed, with evident relish. "I knew it. Only the mists and rains of England can make color like yours. Did you notice how well we looked together as we walked along between the mirrors? Are we not as if made for each other — tall and regal — both of us? What a picture we would make!"

It occurred to me then, with unpleasant appropriateness, that he was the painter of *dead women*.

"It is an English woman, too, that I lack for my collection," he mused meditatively.

"Collection! Have you a collection of women? That is certainly unique. I have heard of collections of bugs, birds, — but women, never. Perhaps you would like me to join it!"

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“Indeed I should! I never saw a woman I admired so tremendously.”

I drew back in fear, silenced by the ardor of his words.

“Oh, you need not be afraid. I am not like other men. I do not love as they love. I love only with my brain. While you have been sitting here, I have caressed you a thousand times, and you have not even suspected it. I do not want the bestial common pleasures which my coachman can have, or my scullion can buy with a *lira*. Why should not I be as much superior to them in my loves as in my life? If I am not, then I am not their superior in any way. My pleasures are those of another plane of life, of a brain touched to a keener fire, of nerves that have reached the highest point of pleasurable vibration. Besides, when I love, I love only dead women. Life reaches its perfection only when death comes. *Life is never real until then,*” he added.

“Perhaps you would like to kill me for

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your amusement to-night," I replied, still trying to keep up the jest. "I have always flattered myself, however, that I was better alive."

No sooner were the words out than I regretted them. His face grew thin and strained like a bird-dog's on the scent. His lips became expressive of a terrible desire, and his frail hands trembled with anticipation.

As I looked, his pupils disappeared, and his eyes became two pools of blue and blazing light. Unwittingly I had hit upon his object. I had surprised his purpose in a jest.

Who could have dreamed of this! At the worst, I thought, I might be detained for two or three days, forced to serve him for a model, and cause worry to my husband and gossiping comment.

But whose imagination could have reached this! Strangely enough, the decree of death that I read in his face dissipated my fear.

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I became calm and collected. In an instant I was mistress of myself and ready to fight for life. The blood stopped pounding in my brain. I could think with normal clearness.

“The worst of it is,” I reflected, “this man is not mad. If he were, I might be able to play upon some delusion for freedom. He has passed the point where madness begins. He has gone just so much too far the other way.”

“Then you really think that you could love me if I were dead,” I laughed, leaning toward him gayly. “Is it not rather a strange requisite for winning a woman’s love? What would my reward be? Are you sure you could not endure me any other way?”

“Do not jest about sacred things! Death,” he answered slowly and reprovingly, “is the thing most to be desired by beautiful women. It saves them from something worse — old age. An ugly woman can afford to live; a

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beautiful woman can not. The real object of life is to ripen the body to its limit of physical perfection, and then, just as you would a perfect fruit, pluck and preserve it. Death sets the definite seal upon its perfection, that is, if death can be controlled to prevent decay. And that is what I can do," he added proudly, getting up in his abstraction and pacing up and down the room. "And what difference does it make, what day it comes? All days march toward death."

I admired unreservedly the elegant, intellectualized figure, now that I had thrown fear to the winds.

"Come," he pleaded, "let me kill you! It is because I love you that I ask you. It is because I think that your physical self is worth being preserved. Your future will be assured. You will never be less happy than now, less lovely, less triumphant. You will always be an object of admiration."

"What a magician you are to picture

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death attractively! But tell me more about it first."

Joy leaped up and sang in my heart at the prospect of the struggle. I felt as the race-horse feels when, knowing the strength and the suppleness of his limbs, he sees the long white track unfold before him.

"In ancient days my ancestors," he began, "were Roman Governors in Spain. At the court of one of them, Vitellius Pontealone, lived a famous Jewish physician (in old Spanish days the Jews were the first of scientists), by name Ibn Ezra. He made a poison (poison is not the right word, I regret greatly its vulgar suggestiveness) from a mineral which has now vanished from the face of the earth. This poison causes a delicious, pleasureful death, and at the same time arrests physical decay. Now, if you will just let me inject one drop of it into that white arm of yours, you will be immortal — superior to time and change, indestructibly young. You do not seem to realize

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the greatness of the offer. For this honor I have selected you from all the women in Naples."

"It is an honor, of course; but, like a proposal of marriage, it seems to me important and to require consideration."

"Oh, no, it is not important. We have to prepare for life, but for death we are always ready. Besides, I am offering you a chance to choose your own death. How many can do that!"

"Do not think that I am ungrateful, good Count, but — "

"One little drop of the liquid will run through your veins like flame, cutting off thought and all centers of painful sensation. Only a dim sweet memory of pleasant things will remain. Gradually, then, cells and arteries and flesh will harden. In time your body will attain the hardness of a diamond and the whiteness of fine marble. But it is months, years, before the brain dies. I am not really sure that it ever dies. In it, like

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the iridescent reflections upon a soap bubble, live the shadows of past pleasures. There is no other immortality that can equal this which I offer. Every day that you live now lessens your beauty. In a way every day is a vulgar death. It coarsens and over-colors your skin, dulls the gold of your hair, makes this bodily line, or this, a bit too full. That is why I brought you here to-night, at the height of your beauty, just as love and life have crowned you."

"It must be a remarkable liquid. Let me see it. Is it with you?"

"No, indeed! It is kept in a vault which it takes an hour to open. It is guarded as are the crown jewels of Italy," he responded proudly.

"There is no immediate danger," I thought. "There is time. Now the road lies long before me."

"I suppose there is an antidote for — this liquid. I will not call it poison, since you dislike the word so greatly."

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“None that is known now. You see it destroys instantly what only patient nature can rebuild.”

“I am greatly interested in it. Show me the other women upon whom you have tried it. I am eager to see its effect.”

“I knew you would be. Come this way.”

We ascended a staircase, where again I felt the sting of light. Upon a landing, half-way up, he paused and pointed to our reflected figures.

“Are we not as if made for each other — you and I? When I sleep the white liquid sleep, I shall arrange that it be beside you.”

My death evidently was firmly determined upon.

At the top he unlocked a door, and we entered a room where some fifty women were dancing a minuet. Above them great crystal chandeliers swung, giving to their jewels and their shimmering silks and satins reflected life. Each one was in an attitude of arrested motion. It was as if they had been

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frozen in the maddest moment of a dance. But what a horrible sight — this dance of dead women, this mimic merriment of death!

“You know my picture of this scene, do you not?” said he, turning on more light. “They were perfect models, I can assure you. I can paint them for hours in any light.

“When I die I shall bequeath to Naples this art gallery. Will it not be a gift to be proud of? Nothing can surpass it in uniqueness. Then the bodies of these women will have attained the hardness and the whiteness of fine marble. They can in no way be distinguished from it except by their hair.

“Of course now, if the outside world knew of this, I should be punished as a murderer.”

How firmly it is settled in his mind that the outside world is mine no more!

“But then I shall be revered as a scientist who preserved for posterity the most perfect human specimens of the age in which I lived. I shall be looked upon as a God. It is as great to preserve life as it is to make it.”

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The next room we entered was a luxurious boudoir. Before an exquisite French dressing-table sat a woman whose bronze hair swept the floor. On either side peacocks stood with outspread tails. Their backs served as a rest for a variety of jeweled hair-pins, one of which she was in the act of picking up.

"That is the Contessa Fabriani. She is not dead yet. She hears every word we say, but she is unable to speak. I am painting her now. You can see the unfinished picture against the wall."

In an adjoining room a dark-skinned woman of the Orient, whose black and unbound hair showed purplish tints, was reclining upon the back of a Bengal tiger. Other Eastern women lay upon couches and divans.

"See, even in death, what enticing languor! See the arrested dreams in their dark eyes, deep as an Oriental night! These women I have loved very greatly. Some-

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times I have a fancy that death cannot touch them. In them there is an electric energy, the stored-up indestructible ardor of the sun, which, I like to fancy, death cannot dissipate."

"Now here," said the Count, opening another door, "I will show you an effect I have tried for years to reproduce. This has been the desire of my life."

He flung back a row of folding windows, making the room on one side open to the sea.

"It is the effect of the blended radiance flung from the water here and the moon, upon dull silver, upon crystal, and the flesh of blond women."

He turned out the lights. The moon sent an eerie, shivering luster across the crystal and silver decorations, and touched three women in robes of white, who were standing in attitudes of dreaming indolence.

"This thin, ethereal, surface light, this *puissance de lumière*, is what I have tried

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in vain to prison. I have always been greedy of the difficult and the unattainable. If I could do this, I should be the prince of painters! It is a fact, a real thing, and yet it possesses the magic of dreams, the enchantment of the fleeting and the illusory.

“I wish to be the wizard of light. I wish to be the only one to prison its bright, defiant insubstantiality.

“Can you not see how wonderful it is? It is the dust of light. Reflected upon silver and clear crystal it is what shadow is to sound. Sometimes it seems to me like a thin, clear acid; then like some blue, sweet-smelling volatile liquid, eager again to join the air.

“Have you noticed how it penetrates blond flesh? It reveals, yet transfigures it. I wish you could watch its effect often. Sometimes the wind churns the sea-light into transparent foam. Then I love its curd-like, piled-up whiteness. Sometimes when there is no moon, and only a wan, tremulous

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luster from the water, the light of a far star is focused on their satins, on their diamonds, struggles eerily among their laces, or flickers mournfully from a pearl. The room then is filled with a regretful, metallic radiance. The stars caress them. They have become impersonal, you see, and the eternal things love them.

“When the autumn moons are high, the light that fills the room is resonant and yellow. It tingles like a crystal. It gives their cold white satins the yellow richness of the peach’s heart, and to the women the enticing languor of life. On such nights the moonlight is musical and makes the crystal vibrate.

“Now, to-night, the light is more like the vanishing ripple of the sea. Is it not wonderful? Look! It is the twin of silence, the ghost of light!”

In his excitement and exhilaration, his eyes shone like the moon-swept sea. I knew that in them, too, slept terrors inconceivable.

“This is the room I have in mind for you.

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You will queen it by a head over the other women. The color of your dress is right. Your gems, too, are white. Here, sometime, I promise to join you, and together we will be immortal.

"Excuse me just a moment. Wait here. Let me get the liquid and show it to you. You will be fascinated by it, just as other women have been. I never saw one who could resist it."

As he left, I heard the key turn in the lock. When we entered the other rooms, I remembered that he bolted the doors on the inside. This door, then, was the only one by which he could gain entrance. Swiftly I slipped the bolt. Now I was safe — for a time, unless there was a secret entrance.

It was not far from the window to the water. I laughed with delight. I had dived that distance many a time for pleasure. I was one of the best swimmers in England, and I had always longed for a plunge in this sapphire sea. Now was my chance and life

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as the goal to gain. I took off my satin gown as gayly as I had put it on. Like the Count of Ponteleone, I, too, admired the play of light on its piled-up whiteness. How merrily the sea-wind came! How it counseled courage!

I took the plunge. Down, down, down I went, cleaving the clear water. The distance up seemed interminable. It was like being born again when at last I saw the white foam feather my arms and felt my lungs expand with air. I swam in the direction of Naples. I could not reach the city, but I could easily reach some fisher's hut and there gain shelter.

Oh, the delight of that warm, bright water under the moon! I felt that the strength of my arms and my legs was inexhaustible. I exulted in the water as a bird exults in its natural element, the air.

After I had covered what I thought to be a safe distance, I turned on my back and floated. Then I caught sight of the window

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from which I had leaped. It was brilliantly lighted. Count Ponteleone was leaning from it, his white hair shining like a malevolent flame.

Despite the distance, I could feel the power of his wild blue eyes, which sparkled like the sea. Again I dived, lest they should reassert their power over me and draw me back.

I came up under the shadow of the shore, and made my way along until I reached a boat where Neapolitan fisherwomen were spreading their nets to dry.

They took me in, and for the doubled price of a good month's fishing brought me that night to Naples.

"Ah, Luigi," I sobbed, as he folded me in his arms, "little did I think, when you spoke of the dance this morning, that I should spend the night with the dead dancing women of Ponteleone."

"Nor I that you would solve Naples' mystery of crime."

THE MIRROR OF LA GRANJA

¿Que es el hombre? Un misterio.

¿Que es la vida? ¡Un misterio tambien!

ESPRONCEDA.

“Sólo en tiempo de Felipe II, cuando el espíritu del Renacimiento se hacía sentir allí, fueron pintadas muchas hermosas damas para su galería de retratos del Prado.”— CARLOS JUSTI.¹

(In the time of Philip the Second, when the spirit of the Renaissance was being felt, he had many beautiful women painted for his gallery of the Prado.— CARLOS JUSTI.)

I ARRIVED in Toulouse on my homeward way to Spain in the midspring of 1898.

For three years I had toured the world with my violin, giving concerts in its principal cities. I had been flatteringly received. Men had showered their gold upon me; women their flowers and favors. I was ac-

¹ From “Diego Velázquez y su Siglo,” by Carlos Justi.

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claimed the Spanish Paganini, the greatest of violinists, the premier artist upon this difficult instrument. I had been surfeited with applause. I had been feted until I was weary. Now I was looking forward to a well-merited rest in which to gratify my love of art, and, perhaps, try my hand at composing. In addition, I longed for the dignified ease, the cultivated leisure of the life of a Spanish gentleman. During the years of concert giving, I had earned enough to give myself this pleasure. I felt, too, that there is something ignoble in prostituting art to gold and the indiscriminate applause of the multitude. Art should be superior to traffic, accessible only to intelligent understanding and to love.

As I mused, a messenger entered and handed me a telegram. It announced the death of my maternal great-uncle, the Conde de Quederos. The telegram said that before the burial every effort had been made to reach me, and that since there were no direct

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heirs, I, as nearest in blood, inherited the estate.

I could not grieve over my uncle's death. I could not be expected to. I had never seen him but once, and that was when I was a child. In addition, I knew that he was old, almost if not quite a centenarian, and that long ago life must have lost its charm. My heart warmed with gratitude toward that kindly Fate which was bestowing favors upon me. Only that morning I had meditated as to what place in Spain, now that my parents were no more, I should choose for a residence. Here was the problem solved without effort on my part and in a most pleasing manner.

I went directly to Cuenca, to the dead Conde's *castillo*, to the heart of that old Castile which the greedy Romans coveted. As I entered, I read upon the fluted shield above the door, "*Adelante*" (Go on). A brave race truly, whose motto was never to turn back.

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In the hall the lined-up servants met me, and each addressed me gravely as Conde de Quederos. That night I had a conference with the steward as to the rooms which I was to occupy.

“The finest suite in the *castillo*, *Señor mio*, is the one the late Conde occupied. It is called ‘The Suite of the Mirrors.’”

“Mirrors!” The word stirred responsive memory. “Is not there a magic mirror, so called, here in the castle? It seems to me I remember having heard something of the kind.”

“*Si, Señor mio*. It is in the drawing-room from which the suite takes its name. They were all made by the late Conde’s great-grandfather at La Granja. Mirror-making was his hobby.”

Yes, yes; now I recalled the stories my mother had told. Aloud I said: “That is the suite which shall be mine. Show me up.”

“Shall I light the drawing-room?”

“No; open the blinds and leave me while

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you have my bags unpacked and my chamber made ready."

The suite consisted of a bed-chamber with dressing-room attached, and a sitting-room, which from its size and adornment was called "The Drawing-Room of the Mirrors."

Here I sat down to rest and smoke my after-dinner cigar. The dim summer night filled the ancient room with frail shadows, making the mirrors, which reached from floor to ceiling, look like pale plates of tarnished steel.

I remembered it all now! It came back in a vivifying flash of thought. The male members of my mother's family, excepting the late Conde, had been scientists *enragés*. They had preferred, too, the delusive byways, the dangerous and insecure footings, where fact borders upon fancy, where the will-o'-the-wisp of unrealized possibility lures on. They had wasted life and impaired their fortunes in following unattainable fancies and in trying to wrest from nature secrets

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forbidden to man. They had been men of strange vagaries and inexplicable passions, who found the pleasure of existence in ways not understood by others.

The great-grandfather of the late Conde had been devoted to mirror-making. It was his effort and his wealth that had brought to La Granja the first Venetian *specchiai*, and those who made *verres de cristal* and wrested from them their secret. He sent to England to Lord Buckingham and to France to Colbert to purchase the knowledge of their workmen in this fascinating art. And it was he who made the sixteen mirrors in the room in which I sat.

Indeed, the age in which he lived had been mad over glass-making. The Council of Ten of the Venetian Republic went so far as to pass a law that its nobles might wed with the glass-makers of Murano without loss of caste. It was the only work which did not detract from a great noble's dignity.

France imitated Venice and made a similar

THE MIRROR OF LA GRANJA

law. Spain, thanks to the effort of Conde de Quederos, was not behind in the art. Nor did the Conde lose standing among the ancient nobility of Castile for the hours spent at the furnace. With its introduction from Italy had come likewise its patent of nobility.

After the old Conde had gratified his love of mirror-making for years and had made fifteen of the sixteen mirrors which hung in the room in which I sat, his mind was teased with the desire to make a magic mirror.

With this object in view, he devoted himself to the chemistry of glass. He bought all the books and ancient manuscripts procurable upon the subject. He thought of nothing else. He talked of nothing else, until it was commonly reported that he was mad. He insisted that it was possible to make a mirror of such exquisite purity, of such lustrous depth, that, like that Borgian glass which snapped in twain at the touch of poison, it should refuse to reflect material bodies and earthly substances and reproduce

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only the impassioned dreams of the mind, or the frail and insubstantial spirit forms which, having once been on earth, hover near in attempt to commune again with the creatures of the flesh. What wonder they called him mad!

A few days before his death, however, the sixteenth mirror was brought from La Granja and hung in the place reserved for it. Just what this mirror was like I could not remember having heard. The next night, when I was less weary, I determined to have a look at the old Conde's productions. In the magic mirror I had no interest. The idea was too absurd. It was a madman's dream.

The next evening I ordered the chandeliers to be lighted in the great drawing-room, and with my violin tucked under my arm hastened thither. It was a noble room that lay revealed beneath the glitter of the swinging crystals. I was glad that I had not spoiled the first effect by seeing it by day. It was lofty, and long by some forty feet. The floor

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was worked out in a curiously dim-bright design made of marble and ancient glass bricks, in whose depth glowed *mille fiori*. The ceiling was a richly resplendent canvas, whereon were depicted giant figures representing the loves of Hercules and Omphale. The walls were made up of alternate panels of mirrors, mural paintings continuing the stories of classic lovers, and spaces of mysteriously colored and strangely wrought glass, evidently rare and priceless specimens of the ancient workmen of La Granja.

At a glance the mirrors seemed as much alike as peas in a pod. They reached from floor to ceiling. They were framed uniformly in the heavily ornate frames with which fifteenth-century Italy supplied the world.

Yet the effect was most lovely. Between the feverish panels wherein the passion of flame had prisoned restless colors and the perfervid scenes of classic love, the mirrors interposed spaces of pale neutrality and mysterious calm. They afforded the relief

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that water affords in the out-of-door landscape. Their unsoundable depths of silence were like a telescopic glimpse into the night of space. They were the mute and motionless keepers of secrets of another world. Their pale passivity was more pleasant than silence. Yet at times they seemed to tell of the possibilities of a spirit life which was centered in colossal calm.

What artistry had been expended upon the decoration of these walls! That dead uncle could have been no ordinary man. My heart thrilled with pride. It was worth being called mad so to have understood the values of light.

Drawing an easy-chair before the central mirror, I took up my violin preparatory to playing. Then I noticed that the frame of the central mirror was unlike the others. I looked about to make sure. Yes, it was the only odd one. And odd enough it was, made of closed flower buds, tiny eggs, and folded leaves. It must mean something, that

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strange frame. It was not chosen with an eye single to decorative ends. It was an hieroglyph, a symbol. But what one? Each detail represented the sleeping germ of a life principle. In the egg, in the bud, life is folded. They pointed to the mirror edge. Did they mean that there too life was folded?

I leaned forward. The cold face of the mirror confronted me. I started with fear. I was not reflected in it! Nothing was reflected in it! Not an article of furniture, not a picture, not a bead of light from the great chandelier above. I looked about. This was the only odd mirror. I made sure of that. All the others were a-quiver with light and color. I held my hand in front of it. I waved my violin to and fro. In vain! They left not a trace upon its surface. Prickly fear crept over me. I shivered as if from touch of the dead or sweep of their icy breath. The mirror's pallid passivity added to the horror. It was the silent mockery of the dead. And this horror was born,

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not of midnight noises and visions, but of silence and the splendor of light.

Only last night in this very room I had called my uncle a madman, a dreamer. How ashamed did I feel of my vain conceit of the evening, confronted with this production of his skill! It was as if some towering ghost smiled down scornful pity upon me, who stood there dancing about like a maniac in the effort to wrest a responsive reflection from that mute surface. Never had anything so undone me, so set me a-tremor with discomfort. I was in touch with something of which I knew nothing, with an unknown force whose extent and power I could not measure.

Controlling my nervousness, I sat down to contemplate the glass. It was like looking into the depths of a pellucid lake, whose surface had never been rumpled by wind or blurred with light. It was like a glance down infinitudes of space, clearly gray and sweetly translucent, but beyond the farthest rim of

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the worlds where not even star dust floated. It was a place where, defiant of natural law, light existed without object. It was a void over which nature had no power. It was a pale inanity, the antithesis of the life principle which is motion. It was a powerful and repellent nothing. A sickening dizziness assailed me. I felt as if I were perched upon the edge of an abyss wherein material substances were lost. I was conscious of a peculiar revulsion, a sort of mental nausea such as is experienced when watching a serpent move, throwing off electric vibrations at variance with the human organism.

This, then, was the mirror of the dead! It was a place for spectres to disport themselves! It was the gray shadow world where phantoms dwelled! Who could guess what slept within its depths! Who could guess what was looking out upon me now which my physical self could not discern!

I closed my eyes to shut out the sight and lifted the violin. The bow, as if moved by

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an impulse of its own, struck the slow, prolonged, high notes which announce the Saraband. An inspiration! Why should not I popularize the dance music of Spain as Chopin had that of Poland?

For a time I played on, repeating old airs and improvising new ones, but ever recurring to the Saraband. Nervousness vanished. Others had put up with this non-committal mirror, why should not I? Courage returned. Music exercised its old magic. Again I cared for nothing save my art.

I do not know how long this musical reverie had lasted when, opening my eyes, I saw in the depths of the mirror, but far, far away, a dim white figure. I was playing the Saraband. I noticed that when certain notes were struck the figure could be seen more plainly, that it grew in distinctness and came nearer, while others made it recede and fade away.

Was it the creation of my bow? Now for the first time was the demon-compelling

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power of Paganini mine? Through contemplation of that crystal surface had I purged my soul of impeding impurities, as if, denuded of clothes, I had swept through space and bathed in its crystal ozone? Had not the tones of my violin changed too? I listened critically. Yes; they had a certain heart quality which had been lacking, a luscious, singing richness, colorful and sweet. The single tone, divorced from melody, filled me with delight. Ambition leaped to giant height. Fear vanished. I could subdue the world—I—I, Lopez Manrico! I bent to my playing. Each time it was the Saraband that evoked the image. No other melody whatsoever had the power to do it. And there were certain phrases and turns of this that had especial effect upon it. Once I thought that I could discern the features of the figure, and I did glimpse it firmly enough to know that it was the figure of a woman.

How I tried to prolong the notes that were creating beneath my eyes that evanescent

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being! How, by trained trickery, did I try to prolong the instrument's power of tone extension! It was useless. Strength failed. My arm grew weak and fell of its own accord, and the vision paled and faded.

The old Counts of Quederos had been scientists, I meditated. One had devoted himself to the relation of sound to the human body. Perhaps he had left a record of his discoveries. I would go to the library and see. At least the books that he had studied would be there. Excepting only the Imperial Library, the Castillo de Quederos contained the finest collection of rare books and manuscripts in Spain.

I ran to the room and lighted all the lights. Ardor of investigation filled me. If the problem could be solved, I would do it. Was it not a duty, too, since in a way the power lay with me? "*Le génie s'oblige.*"

Here were the books of the old glass-maker, probably arranged just as he had left them: John Pechon's treatise on optics,

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dating from the thirteenth century; Birin-guccio's receipts for glass-making; Gar-zoni's chemistry of glass; the three books of Eraclius, who, in the early thirteenth century, got together all that was then known of the art. I took down the third volume. It opened at the seventh chapter, where begin the receipts for compounding the substance. This was not what I wanted. Nor did I care more for the poets — Lopez Men-doza, Ha Levi, nor the private letters of Cib-dareal, precious as they are.

As I replaced the latter, I felt something behind it. Inserting my hand, I pulled out a gilded cylinder. Within it lay a manu-script in an unknown tongue, and with it a translation made by a Spanish Jew. The manuscript proved to be *The Resurrecting Powers of Science* by Abu Hamid Algazali of Bagdad. Something told me that my search was rewarded. I pulled a chair beneath the nearest light and there, until day, perused the parchment. It had suffered many a

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midnight perusal. Finger marks were upon it, and it was frayed and soiled. I read:

“Each body is responsive to a tone or a combination of tones.

“Each body is, in a sense, a musical instrument whose vibrating strings are taut nerves and muscles.

“The circulating blood sings a song.

“Heart-beats describe a melody.

“One of the energies wrapped up in the life principle is a musical chord.

“It is possible for music, if the right tone be discovered, to arrest ebbing life force, or to call back those who have passed beyond.”

“To call back those who have passed beyond!” Here it was! Now I understood. I had unwittingly hit upon the chord that vibrated in unison with the mirror vision. What a possibility lay before me! I could read no more. Dizzy with the discovery, I went to bed. I did not even pause to view the wonder of the dawn that was bleaching the night pale.

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When again night came, I hastened to the drawing-room. I lighted every light. I locked and bolted the door. I would not permit an interruption.

Then I took the melody of the Saraband and transposed it from key to key. In this way the tone I sought could not elude me. The first notes of the dance evoked the figure, but it was so far away, so dim, it was scarcely more than a breath's shadow. It was only with the key of F minor that a change came. Then the figure grew more distinct. Features were visible. It took on color, firm form. It came floating on, on, on, toward me, until within the glass just a few feet away stood a lithe, brown, Moorish girl. My heart choked me with its beating. It was all that I could do to command strength with which to continue the music.

Very gracefully she swayed to the melody of the Saraband, but she danced it in a way that was new to me. On her head rested a tiny cap fringed with vari-colored gems.

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She wore white muslin trousers, very full, gathered at the ankle with bells of gold, whose tongues were little stones that looked like flame. The upper part of her body was covered with a tight-fitting vest of pale blue, picked out in silver, and a tight-fitting coat of yellow satin, both of which were open to the waist, disclosing the brown skin. From under the cap her hair fell in long braids, intertwined with coral. Her little bare feet were encased in slippers with gem-studded heels. She was evidently a Moorish dancing-girl, but of an age long, long gone by.

She had the small head and the broad low brow of ancient races; eyes long, dark, and somber, accented by brows as "delicately arched as those of the pictured Cenci;" a mouth whose warm red undercurve contradicted the saddened eyes.

She was a frail and febrile copy of Da Vinci's St. Marguerite, who, despite her saintship, is a Spanish dancing-girl in a moment of repose. There was something

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about her that stimulated the powers of life, that created a passionate and imperious music which flooded the soul with desire.

But it was the eyes that held my attention longest. They clung to mine with an unwavering glance. In them lay a mute appeal. They looked at me piteously, longingly. They implored help of me. They were like eyes that look from the other side of the grave with the hope that by not losing sight of mine they could draw themselves back and up again to the light. They begged for life. At that moment I would have lain down my own life to give momentary reality to hers.

Nor did she dance continuously like the puppet of my bow. She possessed independent life. She paused and waved and beckoned with her little hands. She tried to make me understand her dumb sign language, but always in her eyes there was that look of piteous questioning.

She was so frail and bright! She was like

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a butterfly made of gauze. A breath could crush her. Yet she danced bravely to please me, to win my applause. Poor little lonely dancer! Who could be more unsuited to the shadow world? Never had I so realized the cruelty of death. Never had I so rebelled against it. What had her crisp muslins, her satins, and her frivolous graces to do with death! I longed to clasp her in my arms, to breathe my own life breath into her, to shield her from that awful fear.

Her eyes looked into mine. Her soul spoke to mine and was understood, but her body I could not reach. It was, perhaps, ages away. It was not space that separated us; it was something crueler far. It was time!

Suddenly a tremor passed over her. What was it! Ah! yes, my weary arm had faltered in its playing. The little face quivered with fear. She held out her arms in mute appeal. I was helpless. The exhausted muscles refused to obey. My arm fell to

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my side. She floated away, away down the dim, gray, mirror vista, her little hands fluttering a sad farewell.

When I put out the lights and leaned from the window for a moment for a whiff of fresh air, I found that the night had gone and that the dawn was streaking faintly the fields and hills.

That day I slept only until noon. Nervous tension prevented rest. The remainder of the day I lounged in the library or idled on the verandas, living over again in thought the incidents of the night. For months this was my life. Not once did I leave the *castillo*, although invitations from the neighboring gentry and my uncle's friends poured in upon me. Nor indeed, during this time, did I see any one but the servants. I denied myself to visitors. I thought only of my Moorish love. I dreamed only of her in the few day hours devoted to sleep. Several times I saw the servants touch their foreheads significantly when they passed me,

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and I heard them whisper, "The madness of the De Quederos!"

My life now took on an excessive value. Did not another depend upon it? Without me my Moorish love was dead. With me she enjoyed a semi-being. At times I suffered the most torturing fear lest accident to me condemn her forever to oblivion. The thought shook my soul.

Each night when my playing evoked her, she begged more piteously for life, and I, who so gladly would have granted it, was powerless. Each night her sign language was more comprehensible, more eloquent of longing and of love. Each night my love for her grew greater. When the hour for parting came, I felt grief such as they who bury those they love. How could I know where she went, what horrors encompassed her! How could I know what difficulties she had conquered to come to me! How could I know that she would ever come again!

By day the burden of my mind was to

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know where, only to know where, she was! Not even the feverish imaginings of my heart could frame an answer.

At night, when lights began to twinkle in the little houses of the village and the stars to show one by one, I looked out and cursed them, because I knew that in not one of them all was she. In all the broad firmament she was not. She alone, my Moorish love, had no share in the sweetness of the spring. I grew to hate the world that had cast her off. I became a solitary. How could I be expected to mingle with people, to leave the *castillo*! Would it not be murder to do so even for the space of a night? Not all crimes are amenable to law. Her life depended upon me. Absence meant death. Could I condemn her I loved to one unnecessary hour within the grave? Did I not always see, sleeping or waking, the piteous eyes that begged for life? Did I not always see the mouth that tried to smile, to coquette, despite the death-fear that drooped it?

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But how could I explain this to the Conde's friends? Had I done so, they would not have understood. I really believe they would have called me mad. I persisted in silent refusals.

What a fate was mine! I loved a woman who was separated from me by the centuries. I loved a phantom, a vision, a self-created mirage. I, alone, knew that this vision possessed life. Night after night we conversed by signs. Eyes looked into eyes, soul into soul, yet might we never join hands or lips. We saw each other plainly, yet might our voices never bridge the chasm of the ages. Within arm's reach of me she stood, and smiled and beckoned, yet I had not the power to touch her. Her red lips voiced messages to me, but the wind of ages rushed between and swept them away to bury within soundless silence. What torture was this! What inexplicable suffering! In subtle punishment the curse of Tantalus was not its kin.

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Only to the violin could I confide my sorrow. I threw away my music. My heart alone dictated. Thus I poured forth my longing, my unsatisfied passion, and my grief. Thus I voiced my anger, my hatred of men, of life, my rage against that silent and invisible God who mocked me with his might, and reduced my endeavor to puny impotence.

Sometimes, when cruel notes shivered the air, and sharp discords all but snapped the strings, I caught sight of the frightened faces of the servants coming one by one, a-tiltœ, to peer at me. Or below I saw teamsters turn sharply to avoid the *castillo* and the Roman bridge beneath my window. Too, there were fewer travelers on the road of late. Less often sounded the friendly mule bell. The simple peasants were terrified by the sounds of hate and rage. The servants, too, feared me. They believed me to be "*possessed.*" The old steward, alone, had a different opinion. He attributed my peculiarities to drink or infatuation for a woman.

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The more so since of late no one had been admitted to my rooms. One day the kind old fellow touched my arm in a fatherly manner and whispered, "*Mi hijo, niños y vinos son mal a guardar!*"

It was too late for the kindly offices of friends. I was hopelessly given over to an infatuation. I had lost regard for appearances. I did not care.

Swiftly the days slipped by. I paid as little heed as do they who live under emotional strain. Spring deepened into summer; autumn came. In time its color faded beneath the mists of November. Before I knew it, *la noche de los difuntos* (the night when the dead come back) was at hand.

It pleased me to think that then I could celebrate my wedding with the dead. For the occasion I had the great drawing-room filled with flowers. At the last moment the caprice seized me to don the state costume of a courtier of Philip the Second. Then I drew a gilt couch of old brocade in front of the

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mirror and with closed eyes began to improvise upon the dance.

Suddenly a little hand touched my shoulder and a voice whispered: "Will you not look at me, now that I have come?"

There she was beside me, and more lovely by half when freed from the mirror's grayness.

"But you—will you not tell me who you are?" I whispered back in an ecstasy of love.

"Zarabanda."

"Zarabanda!"

"Yes, why not?"

"The Moorish love of Philip the Second?"

Passion and its artistic embodiment, music, had made my love outlast the empire that gave her birth. She had survived Spain and its splendor.

I was perched upon a dizzy height indeed. Below me the gray centuries unfolded.

At the word "Philip" grief contracted her face.

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“Oh, Philip! Philip! Will you not call him? Will you not let me see him? I will never ask it of you again. You need not be afraid because he is a great king. Give him this,” taking a bracelet of peculiar workmanship from her arm and handing it toward me. “He will understand. He will come anywhere for me.”

Grief filled my heart. It was not I she loved—I, who had recreated her, who had brought her back from the grave. It was not I she thought of, but that cruel and long-dead king.

“Believe me, my little love, I would do anything for you but this—which is impossible.”

“Just once, please, just once! He was so handsome, Philip, and he loved me so. Before he married Mary of England he took me to Granada, to the town of the wall of a thousand towers. There he would have married me, had it not been for Perez, the Great Minister!”

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At mention of that name a shiver passed over her, the memory of an ancient fear, setting crisply a-jingle the gems upon her cap and the gold bells on her trousers.

“There I invented the Saraband. It was the dance he loved, and he named it for me. All Spain danced it then.

“One day he was called away by a court messenger from Madrid. When he left, he swore to marry me. On a certain day I was to meet him, having sent word three days before. Then he was to marry me and make me queen!

“But as soon as he went, I was seized and imprisoned. I could not send him word. I never saw him again. Oh, please let me tell him why. He thinks I failed him. Let me tell him why!”

“I would do it if I could. I would do anything for you, but how can I?”

“Why? Philip is not—” Her dark face blanched, fear leaped into her eyes. “Philip — is not — dead?”

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I nodded. Not a word did she say, but tears came to her eyes and fell slowly, one by one, upon her little hands. Never before had I realized the word's leaden weight. It was a plummet line that found the heart of grief.

“Then there is nothing more to live for!”

The words pierced me like a dagger. I knew how complete was her indifference to me.

“How long ago did he die?” she asked, with a sigh that shook her body as a ground swell shakes the sea.

Could I tell her? That would mean another grief.

“Tell me when he died; how long ago.”

“In 1598.”

“And now what year is it?”

“1898. Three hundred years.”

“Three hundred years he has slept and dreamed me false! And now I can never tell him!”

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My heart forgot its suffering in sympathy for her.

“Now I can never tell him!”

Silence fell between us. She forgot my presence, so complete was her absorption in the past.

The breath of the late autumn came through the ancient windows, slanting for an instant the flames of chandeliers and sconces until they looked like an army’s bloody spears upraised in flight. Opposite the mute mirror oppressed me with its suggestion of nothingness and of space. The flowers, too, became restless and shivered, as if some foreign element had disturbed them.

As I thought thus gloomily, the little brown hand fell on mine, and the voice whose sound was like the veiled tone-sweetness of a harp was saying:

“Then, if it was so long ago, you did not know Tiziano, who painted me, did you?”

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How pitiful was this effort to be gay!
“Tiziano-was-a-noble-man-from-Venezia.”
The words were hyphenated with sighs.

“Oh, he was a very great painter! He said I was the loveliest woman in Europe. The court ladies were wild with envy. But he would have none of them. It was I he wanted—I—I! He painted me lying beside an open window, a Cupid holding a crown above my head. At my feet sat Philip—Philip, the king, at my feet! There is a little cap upon his head, and he is playing the Saraband upon his lute. In the background I made him paint the highland country of Madrid, which I should look out upon when I was queen—”

“Yes!” I interrupted excitedly, unable to stand more. “Philip might have given you a crown; I have given you life. Which is greater? Whom do you owe the most? Have you no thought of me? My love has brought you back from the grave, and now you think only of him!”

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The little hand on mine fluttered sensitively. I grasped it. Its delicate touch made me recall what I had read of the fine skin texture of women of the dark races. I pressed my lips to it with delight. From it came a peculiar odor, as from some unknown exotic, which took the senses captive.

Until now I had never loved a woman. I had loved pictures, I had loved marbles, but a living woman never. Acquaintance with the most exquisite and exacting of arts had perhaps made my senses superfine. The slightest physical imperfection was sufficient to spoil my pleasure. Old age — that physical memory of many wearinesses — filled me with disgust. Of love I did not ask a return, but the near presence of something faultless, something which might never pall upon my senses, something which I might love unrestrainedly.

During the years of concert giving I had been attracted by beautiful faces, but acquaintance seldom failed to dispel the glam-

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our. Their possessors were self-seeking, vain, frivolous. Disgust took the place of admiration. It was a disagreeable sensation which I did not like to endure for the second time, to find a woman of delicate and sensitive beauty possessed of the grasping nature of a miser, or caring only for detail of practical things. Nothing in womankind had made me so dislike the race as this union of external beauty and prosaic practicability.

Here, for the first time, was a woman whom I could love. She had none of the traits of the modern woman. She could not prate of things that disgusted and bored me. In her eyes there was no consciousness of the life I detested. She was mine in a very real sense because I had created her. I measured the greatness of my love by the knowledge that I could love on while knowing that her heart was another's. If one loves, it is not necessary to be loved in return. Love is its own reward. Already I felt its ennobling influence.

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Ah! how she enchanted my soul leaning there against the high gilt sofa's end! Her black braids swept the floor. Her brown feet from which the slippers had fallen were folded childishly, showing little pink nails a-shine.

Every gem of color on her costume was like the dropping of a note of liquid melody into my soul. She was an exquisite toy of flesh fashioned for love. She was a fine-wrought gem of palest bronze, from which the swinging lights struck cream and amber gleams.

“Zarabanda, my Moorish love! You shall learn to care for me and forget him. I swear it! What a life we will lead together, you and I! He could have brought Spain to your feet. I will bring the world. You shall see! You shall see! I will bring the world. I will show this modern age which loves ugliness — I will show it the noble type of antique beauty!” Thus I raved in my infatuated dream.

My fervor moved her. She sat up erect.

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The jewels on her cap danced brightly. She leaned toward me. I saw that my suit was not to be in vain. The look of piteous fear within her eyes which had so haunted me for months was gone. In its place there was a look which, had she possessed no other charm, would have bound me to her forever. How shall I describe it?

It was the essence of that which I missed in modern pictures which represent antique life. It was just that which I missed in the women of Tadema. It was just that which their eyes had not. It was a look made up of the accumulated days of living a life totally dissimilar to our own, a life made up of dissimilar thoughts, pleasures, needs. In short, I saw within the eyes of Zarabanda the soul of a vanished age. My mind was filled with a thousand fancies.

Looking at her, I sensed vividly the imperial love-hours of Moorish beauties who had wantoned by the wall of a thousand towers. Their purple and palpitant past

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engulfed me. The penetrating color-joy of pagan pageants swept my senses, leaving a myriad burnished points of thought. The voluptuous phantoms of past pleasures intoxicated me. The life that pagan Spain had lived in ancient days, before Christianity had come to make bitter upon its lips the wine of joy, was distilled within my soul. Love, thought, creative fire, lifted life to divinest height, intensifying all its powers.

Before my feverish and exalted fancy there rose a vision of the East, the personified East, the seductive East, the glorious and sensuous East, swathed in a robe of mist which palpitated like the voluptuous veins of women when the tide of love is high. This vision inundated my senses in a shimmering wave, which rolled its long, foaming coils of pleasure over me.

Bending down, I folded her in my arms. I felt her little brown arm slip round my neck, its softness rivaling the down beneath

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a sea-gull's wing. The penetrating Eastern perfumes struck my face, the blended sweetness of aloes and ambergris. Her brown breasts became two moons of gold beneath the shadowy twilight of her throat. The thick hair with its trailing braids was an Eden of dim and amorous ways, where a promise dwelled. As I drew her nearer, her eyes became black lakes. Exquisitely pale her face was, like warm ivory. Nearer and nearer to me the red mouth came; I knew that upon it dwelled all the sweetness and all the savors of the South. My lips just brushed it, when, with a reverberant crash, the great mirror fell and shivered in a thousand pieces. My arms encircled the empty air. She was gone — gone, and forever.

Thick dust of powdered chemicals, with which the glass was coated, filled the air. I hastened to gain the window. Something fell at my feet. It was her bracelet.

I reached the window just as the sun, its

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red rays throbbing like a crown of blood,
dipped above the horizon line. By its angry
glare I read upon the golden band, which
was all that remained to me now of my
one night of joy, "Philip, To His Moorish
Love."

LISZT'S CONCERTO PATHÉTIQUE

IT was in the winter of 1906 that the following remarkable incidents were communicated to me, and truly in a most remarkable manner. But who may say what shall be the intermediary link, the invisible tie to connect us with the facts of a vanished past? Who may say what vague but mentally potent beings dwell on the border line separating the real from the unreal, floating up perhaps from unthinkable depths of time and space, there to await the propitious moment for tapping some nerve of consciousness in us and establishing telegraphic communication with the soul? Over these spirit wires of thought and feeling they flash faint messages. They set the nerves a-tingle with the consciousness of an infinity of unknown lives surrounding our own, of invisible electric bodies that shock

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## LISZT'S CONCERTO PATHÉTIQUE

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us into the recovery of forgotten memories, of the realization of a limitless land that spreads beside us and upon the verge of which we live precariously poised.

On an afternoon in the winter of 1906 I attended a concert given by two well-known pianists. The *pièce de résistance* of the concert — it was for this that I had come — was a two-piano number, the *Concerto Pathétique* of Liszt, that sonorous tone tragedy with its wildly dramatic incidents, interrupted from time to time by a melody of more than mortal sweetness. As I listened, annoyed by the movements of seat companions, the bobbing black heads in front, or the dry winter light that filtered through a window to the right, striking sharply a corsage ornament or a jewel, and projecting into my eyes dagged light as from a crystal ball, suddenly my surroundings vanished, and I found myself alone looking out across a land that I had never seen.

Before me lay a twilight desert, somber and

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## LISZT'S CONCERTO PATHÉTIQUE

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lonely. Gray sand, uninterrupted by tree or dwelling, as undulating and as barren as the sea, stretched on and on. After a time I discovered that it was not twilight that caused the dimness. Upon the horizon there was nothing to indicate the vanishing of a sun or the future rising of a moon. Within the sky there were no stars. A Cimmerian twilight lay over all. I realized then that it was some place of purgatorial punishment, where sweet light did not come nor green earth growths, nor rain, nor the sound of leaves. It was a place of puzzling incompleteness and fragmentary physical form. There were arms twisted and bony and unattached to bodies, whose bent-fingered hands thirsted for cruelty or itched for gold. There were legs wrinkled and withered with pain and curved fantastically. There were backs bowed by the bearing of burdens, and a multitude of winged and awful faces forming a discordant chromatic scale of miseries, now flashing out leering and wanton smiles,

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### LISZT'S CONCERTO PATHÉTIQUE

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and anon fading away into monotonous grayness.

It was a land of disembodied pain, where the shadow forms of sorrow dwelled. Regret, remorse, shame, misery, and anguish here got themselves clothed in unearthly substances, and strained futilely earthward where repentance lay. Here evil thoughts and desires were at once translated into form, swiftly to fade back again by uncountable disgusting gradations to the insubstantiality of dreams.

Across this desert a woman fled, breathless with haste and terror. She was young, scarcely more than a child, as years count, and she would have been beautiful had not her features been disfigured by grief. Out behind, a long black robe floated like an emblem of evil, giving to her appearance a certain cloistral touch. Closer inspection proved it to be a nun's cloak. It was unfastened and thrown hastily about her where it was held together by one small nervous hand.

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### LISZT'S CONCERTO PATHÉTIQUE

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Her hair, which was pale gold, was short-cropped and curly, and bore the imprint of a close covering. There was something pitiful in these little clustering curls of faded gold, which were down-soft like the hair on a baby's neck. They told of helplessness and youth. Now in places they were darkened by the perspiration of fear. Cloistral life and the nun's hood had bleached her face and given to it a marble pallor, until it seemed to radiate light in the general dimness. Her eyes were a dark ethereal blue. In their depths lay a light made of blended pain, passion, and regret. As the hideous sand monsters drifted toward her, threatening to block her way, then vanished to reshape themselves into still more hideous forms, childishly she opened her mouth to call for help. But no sound issued from her lips, although the little chin quivered piteously. I knew that she was dumb and could not speak.

As she sped on, upborne by an unnatural
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## LISZT'S CONCERTO PATHÉTIQUE

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energy, there rang out upon the desert air a melody of more than mortal sweetness, the brief and broken fragment of a phrase. As the music died away upon the moonless space, there fell across the sand the pallid cold radiance of a cross, but so far away, so etherealized by space and distance, that it was scarcely more than a shadow's shadow.

At first, I thought that the music was in some inexplicable way related to the beauty of her face—that perhaps they were one. There was a similarity between them. Both set to vibrating the same responsive fibers of the heart. Both were penetratively sweet, yet touched with sorrow.

Further consideration proved this conjecture to be vain, and that the music came from some alien yet nearby place. I could see by the woman's face that it caused her joy and sorrow, and I felt that it always sang on in her heart, and that her trembling lips tried to frame its sounds. Yet—in some way I could not understand—it kept



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her forever outside the radiance of the cross.

Again and again it rang out — a melody of more than mortal sweetness. And each time the woman hastened her pace. The face of the desert began to change, and in the distance there was something that lay like the shimmer of light. I watched it as it grew brighter. Colors were distinguishable. It was a garden! Oh, the yearning in her face! Oh, the effort with which she summoned strength to reach it! Her eyes grew black with determination. Her little curls were spotted with moisture. Sweeter and more penetrating became the breath of melody. It winged her feet with courage. It put strength into her heart. Yes, yes, there it lay! A fresh, bright, green garden, where a happy multitude of tiny blue and white flowers grew. Over it iris-winged insects fluttered. The sun shone resplendently. Here was the home of the melody. Its sweetness was that of love and the fullness

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of life. Now the radiance of the cross no longer touched the sandy waste. It remained high in the air, aloof and far, a wan gold shadow of exquisite remoteness, like the ghost of a vanished joy.

As she drew nearer, more intense became the light that fell upon the garden. It became a blue and dazzling glory, beneath which the tiny flowers expanded and expanded until they were lilies of mammoth size and proportion. Oh, so lustrous, so satin soft, so voluptuously lovely was their texture! A rare fragrance filtered from them through the sand-thick air, a languorous, seductive, benumbing fragrance, like the intangible soul of pleasure. When again the music came, the giant lily buds burst open, disclosing in place of pistil and stamen the white glorious bodies of women, whose hair outfloated in bright crinkles like blown flame, and whose feet trod an amorous measure.

Now I knew whence the music came. It

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was made by the twining beauty of seductive arms, the swaying of bright torsos, the interlacing of lithe limbs, the argent light struck from bared breasts and brows. It was their white passion, their wanton lowness, their amorous longing, their electric, vital, and indomitable youth translated into tone.

Far above the desert now, the wan cross hung in dim remoteness, a faint frown of light, withdrawing coldly into the depths of space. The garden glory touched the woman's face. The sand monsters fell back, no longer encumbering her. Happiness and courage shone from her eyes. The journey was nearly over. A step — a dozen steps and she would have gained the garden. She was all but there. She flung away the convent cloak. The sweet wind lifted the little curls upon her brow. A blue lily leaned amorously to meet her, its petals ready to enfold her. The strange light swathed her about like a robe. The melody touched her heart



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to joy. She was ready to grasp a waiting flower; one white hand reached for it, when a thunder of many wings was heard.

From across the desert, from the sky above, a multitude of blackish green-winged monsters, darkening the air to a dun midnight, dashed down. Their black and sullen bodies, outspread wing on wing, shut out the garden and formed a hideous wall of crawling heads. The great wings surrounded and engulfed her, beating her back — back — back — with lightning-like rapidity. Away, away, away they swept her, so swiftly that the desert was left behind. And still they swept her on and on, across another land — a land of granite, bleak and sterile and black, whose darkness was shivered from time to time by the angry glare of whirling swords that formed the mighty gate of a realm of night. Here the whirring wings uplifted her. She had no more hold upon the earth. Below, above, beside, were depth on depth of overlapping wings. Once, for an instant, the swaying,



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fluttering band fell back. Sharp sword light streaked her face. I saw its white horror and the little curls a-dance with fear. Then more monsters came rushing. The earth and the air were a-quiver with wings. There was a rush and a roar. There was a noise as of many waters. Then the monsters swept away into the land of darkness beyond, where nothing was distinguishable, where there was no measurement of time or space. Again the granite land was lone and silent, its gray immovableness disturbed only by the swinging gate of swords, which streaked the rocks with floating ribbons of light.

SISTER SERAPHINE

WE were sitting upon the terrace of Château Châteauroux in the early evening — the old Comtesse M——, Mischna Stepanoff, and myself. It was the time of the first soft warmth of spring. Two blossoming fruit trees beside us were sweet ghosts in the early night. About them white butterflies fluttered.

In the west there were great piled clouds edged with a pink as rare and as wonderful as that which Watteau created for his frail creatures of joy. And this pink was reflected in soft broken ribbons in the gently moving surface of the Loire.

“What a night for love!” sighed Mischna Stepanoff, in whose life the passion had played no unimportant part.

“Yes,” I replied, “love and youth and spring; they are earth’s immortal trinity.”

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“That reminds me of a story — a true story — of spring and youth and love,” sighed reminiscently the old Comtesse, who had been a famous beauty in her day.

“Tell it to us,” urged Mischna Stepanoff. “Next to being in love oneself is the pleasure of listening to the stories of other people who have been in love.”

“But I feel that I cannot do justice to it,” objected the old Comtesse. “It is a story for the pen of Maupassant, who wrote of the tress of hair. It might have been included among the pagan and Oriental dreams of Gautier, or such fragile and dainty reminiscences of youth as De Nerval occasionally indulged in. What could I do with a fancy like that?”

“Tell it, anyway,” we insisted.

“Well, what I lack, your own greater imaginative skill must supply,” — smiling and waving deprecatingly toward us a tiny jeweled hand.

“It is the strangest, the most interesting story in the world. And it is true.

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“Over there where the hills step aside to make room for the passing of the Loire, is the ruin of a convent which you have probably noticed. In my youth it was inhabited by Les Sœurs Blanches, a well-conducted and aristocratic order of nuns, who educated the daughters of the old noblesse.

“One day I paid a visit there and for the first time saw Sister Seraphine. She was about eighteen then, I should judge, although she had already taken the final vows. I was at once attracted by her face and her strange beauty. The upper part of the face — the brow, the eyes, the nose — were those of an ascetic, a dreamer, an intellectual. The brow was nobly formed and broad; the nose chastely chiseled and modeled to an artist’s taste; and the eyes were the spiritual gray-blue of the mystic. The eyes were very beautiful, too — mistily humid, like the valley of our Loire here on a morning of spring.

“But the mouth! How can I tell you what

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it was like! There will never be another in the world like it. In its color alone there were hidden all the sins of earth. Such a color might have been born from the conflagration of a world, or in the feverish brain of some sightless dreamer. In its curves there was all the resistless languor of a mediæval mondaine, or a voluptuous Roman woman who had idled in the villas of Baiæ. Imagine, if you will, such a mouth beneath that ascetic brow! It was the cause of her undoing, too — and her ruin.

“It contradicted the rest of her face so sharply that it was as if she were two persons in one. It threw the beholder into a sort of stupefaction. It made him feel as if he had stumbled awkwardly upon some unguarded secret. It was that rarest of all features — a perfect mouth! And yet, perchance, I think its perfection was a trifle over-accented. It was, I think, a shade too red, too alluring, too sensuous. It was a veritable Cupid’s bow set about with mock-

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ing dimples that changed like light on the mobile surface of the Loire.

“No one could have known less of the world than Sister Seraphine. She had been placed with *Les Sœurs Blanches* when she was four years old. And she had never once left their sheltering care. She was of noble blood, too, although the bar sinister blackened her birth record. On her father’s side, it was whispered, she came of that royal blood of old France that had never known the meaning of fear. And her mother was the gay Comtesse of Marny.

“Now in all her young life Sister Seraphine had never seen a man except the village priests and those who sat on Sundays beyond the grating in the church. Think of it! Can you even imagine such a condition! Every holiday and fête day before her final vows were taken, plans had been made to give her an outing in the great world, to introduce her to that society to which by birth she belonged. But, some way or other,

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each time the plans miscarried. Some other person's welfare and happiness intervened, had to be considered first. The result was that she had never left the convent walls.

"Shortly after this first visit of mine, the Duchesse de St. Loisy presented to the convent two long mirrors for the reception room. About this same time Sister Seraphine was put in charge of the room to receive guests and the relatives of the *jeunes demoiselles* on visiting days. Callers at the convent were not very frequent in those days. Traveling facilities were not what they have come to be since, so Sister Seraphine was left alone for hours in the great room.

"Here she acquired the habit of looking at herself in one of the mirrors. At first eyes stared blankly back at eyes. She could not see *herself*. It is difficult, always, to get acquainted with oneself. That to me, Mischna Stepanoff, has been one of the pleasures of living—to find within me things that I did not dream were there. Sister Seraphine after

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a while discovered her mouth. She was surprised, as you may imagine. It was as if it were the mouth of some strange unknown person who dwelled within her. It was — *the other* — made visible!

“Soon she sensed, rather than reasoned, that it was in harmony with the fragrant creative spring outside; that she was part of an universal nature that lived and laughed. It seemed to her that even in repose her mouth laughed. It was like the pagan sunshine, which always laughed. She became interested in her mouth. She became fascinated with the many things that it expressed, with its color, its flexibility, and its capacity for joyous sensation, if by chance she touched it to a flower.

“One night, just before she closed and left the great room for the night, she leaned long by the mirror’s edge looking up at the stars through a near-by window. They were merry that night, the stars. It was spring, which is youth in the world, and they

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laughed. They laughed so gayly, so alluringly, that she turned impulsively and kissed her own mouth in the mirror.

“For days after this Sister Seraphine was meditative and beyond her habit thoughtful. She could not look at the mirrors. Her cheeks flushed with shame. She felt disgraced and dishonored. Every time she was obliged to pass by the great mirrors, she carefully turned her eyes away.

“During these days it seemed as if Spring, like a bandit, broke through the ponderous convent walls. Its murmur and its mystery and its fragrance and its buoyant life were everywhere. They poured invisibly through the somber, painted windows. They swept enticingly down the long bare halls. All night they sang beneath the casements of the penitential chambers. They awoke with the first penetrating sweetness of the dawn.

“Each morning, in the opening flower cups, Sister Seraphine found other mouths

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that looked like hers. She saw there the same desirous, satiny lips. The same brilliant color burned upon them, the same dewy ripeness. One night, unable to sleep, so many and so mighty were the voices that called her, she got up softly and tiptoed down the long bare corridors to the reception room. It was not ever really night anywhere that spring, it seems to me as I recall it. The frail gray shadows of summer made instead a sort of semi-day.

“She knelt down on the floor in front of one of the mirrors. There she saw a white face under an aureole of short gold hair, two eyes that shone like stars, and a mouth that was red as a wound. Again she kissed it. When she crept back to her room, she found it lonelier than before. Something, she knew not what, was missing. The world was empty. Some joy had gone out of life.

“The next day she asked for permission to see Father Richards, the aged priest of the parish.

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“‘Father,’ she began, ‘you know that I have never left the convent walls, do you not?’

“‘Yes, my daughter.’

“‘You know that I have known no other home.’

“‘Yes, my daughter.’

“‘That I have read only my breviary and the books of the saints. And yet, Father, I have sinned, sinned grievously — ’

“‘How, my daughter?’

“‘I have kissed — ’

“‘Kissed?’

“‘Yes, Father. I have kissed a mouth, because I wanted to; because it was red and sweet, like the flowers outside in the spring.’

“‘What! You say — Explain, my daughter!’ said the aged priest, greatly puzzled.

“‘I kissed my own mouth, Father. I kissed it in the mirror, not once, Father, but twice. And I am not sorry. It gave me pleasure, Father. Were not mouths made to kiss? And the pleasure was not that

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which I have felt when I kissed the white feet of the Virgin. And I am not sorry, Father.'

"It is your youth, my daughter; spring, too, in the blood. You must pray and fast — especially fast. That will subdue evil.'

"No, Father. I think differently. I will not. I am going away. The great mirrors in the drawing-room there have shown me my mouth, Father. And it has told me of another life — a life to which I belong! Do you know what made it so red, so wonderful, so faultless, Father, this mouth of mine? It was the splendid, free, pleasure-loving, tempestuous lives that they lived who made me. There is not in this mouth of mine one servile curve, one penitential or humiliating line, one touch of pleading or regret. Although I have not seen them, I know that it must have been a great race that bore me. They did not even leave me a name to which I have a just claim. But right here, on my mouth, Father, they set the red seal of their

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pleasures, their aristocratic arrogance, their fearlessness, and their power.

“I can see the life they lived! I can see it all — through the days and the nights and the years. A regal life it was, in great moat-encircled castles, amid clash of steel, cries of joy and triumph and music and the madness of power.

“I can see the white glorious faces of the women they loved, framed in fluttering and triumphant banners.

“Think of the kisses given by brave men to the lips of beautiful women! Think of the banquets and the feasting in great halls, where a thousand candles flickered over satins and silks and gems and laces and smooth shoulders and lustrous hair! Think of the wine they drank in those long, long nights of revelry — wine that had treasured up and kept the sweetness of a thousand springs; think of the songs, the laughter, the dance, the jests! Think of the resounding hunt across fields vivid with spring; the

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inspiriting call of the horns, the tossing of plumes, the eyes afire with joy!

“Think of their daring and their high-hearted days when they cheerfully placed life in the balance, to weigh against a kiss! Think of the strength that took whatsoever it wanted, regardless of results; that flung defiance in the face of Fate!

“This mouth, Father, told all this to me. This mouth is their message to me.

“Do you know what has happened, Father? The strangest, the most unbelievable, the most preposterous thing in the world! I have been seduced by my own mouth! A miracle! A miracle of earth, not of heaven, Father — by my own mouth!

“I am going away, too, Father, now.”

“And right there, before the feeble and astonished old man, she tore off her hood and the bindings of her brow, and went out into the spring that was waiting for her — across the fields, and away. Think of the audacity, the power of decision, the strong,

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quick-working will that nothing could enfeeble!

“You have both heard of Madame X——, have you not, who had such a genius for life and luxury, whose sables the Tzaritsa envied, who had at her feet half the desirable men of France? She was Sister Seraphine.”

“Every one has a right to happiness, do you not think so?” exclaimed Mischna Stepanoff, the joy of her own lost youth leaping to her eyes.

THE SACRED RELICS OF SAINT EUTHYMIUS

ABOUT the middle of the sixteenth century there was built, on the westward-facing coast of Istria, a pleasure palace. The builder, Paul, Count of Radknothy, was a Hungarian nobleman of wealth and power, who had traveled widely and formed his taste upon the best models of the day.

On his frequent journeys he tarried oftenest in Venice. The rich and luxurious city held for him the charm it has never failed to hold for the people of the North.

Here he met La Fiorita, a dancer renowned for her beauty. She was his senior by a number of years and a woman of unsavory reputation. The story of her amours, which had been many, sounded like a page from Masuccio, and had been the talk of Italy. She had been *persona grata* with

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the nobles of that licentious age. She had ruled as temporary mistress of many a summer palace hidden away among the Italian hills. For Count Radknothy she had the fascination which women of mature years have had for younger men. He married her and took her away to his Istrian home.

She was glad of this lucky stroke of fortune. She realized that, considering the life she had led, her beauty could not last in its perfection.

In the second year after her marriage, shortly before the time of her first confinement, she was miraculously saved from death at the hands of an assassin by a Carthusian nun, whom the blow struck. The assassin, who paid for the attempt with his life, was a follower of her old days, in whose heart her beauty had been more than a fancy.

This escape from death back into the luxurious life she had never ceased to look

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upon as the kindness of Providence, aroused the religious fanaticism that slumbers in the Italian soul. In return, she made a vow that the unborn child should be sacred to the church. Later, a daughter was born to Count and Countess Radknothy, who was christened Elsbeth.

Overjoyed at her safe delivery, chastened in mind by the favors of Heaven, the Countess decided that the child should take the veil in a convent of the Silent Sisters. Then she felt that she had atoned for the sins of her youth. Accordingly, when little Elsbeth was twelve years old, she was sent to the Hungarian Convent of St. Euthymius.

This convent, which had once been the war-castle of a feudal lord, and which bore witness to its past in its stern and forbidding exterior, was situated in northwestern Hungary, just south of the Little Carpathians, and surrounded by their gloomy forests. It stood on an elevation. On the north a lake lay, whose outlet was the

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shallow Ipoly, which to southward joins the Danube. It was a hilly, thinly populated country of ancient mansions separated from each other by miles of woodland.

From the convent but one building was visible, the family chapel of the Ràkoczi, a family of royal lineage whose male members had led the wars for Hungarian independence. The castle was on the other side of the chapel and its rear was toward the lake. On the north side of the convent there was but one window. From this the warlike baron used to watch his enemies approach. Beneath the window, clinging to the wall, was a staircase. This was the room which was assigned to Elsbeth.

Notwithstanding her childish immaturity, it was evident that she had inherited her mother's blond beauty, which, in her case, was made more brilliant by the father's Hungarian blood. During the two years that had preceded her daughter's birth, La Fiorita had luxuriated in her Istrian palace.

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Here, freed from the efforts of a dancer's life, and cherished by a love in the flower of its youth, her beauty had reached its perfection. In addition, little Elsbeth had inherited her mother's abundant vitality and her taste for music and dancing.

Because of the child's love of music and the noble family to which she belonged, the rules of St. Euthymius were lifted, and she was permitted to take her lute with her. La Fiorita consoled herself with the thought that the lute would take the place of conversation, which was forbidden. With this solicitude she dismissed the subject. She felt that she had purchased the forgiveness of Heaven and gave herself over unrestrainedly to the life of pleasure she loved.

It was autumn when Elsbeth reached St. Euthymius. The repellent exterior of the convent-fortress was softened by the richness of the season. Autumn once seen among the mountains of Hungary is something always to remember. A languid

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radiance enfolds the landscape. The stern Carpathians float in a mist of blue, through which white, fragile birches and fiery maples gleam. The forests and the mountains are reflected in the water. Along the roads ferns expand into fans of gold. The woodlands exhale an aromatic perfume.

The witchery of the season dulled the first pain of separation. But when the rains of November scattered the leaves, and the wind sang about the lonely towers and echoed down the bare corridors, she cried like a little child to go home. The sisters' efforts to comfort her were vain. Equally vain were their attempts to divert her mind with lessons and prayer. She still cried to go home.

There was no devotional chord in her nature to respond to the good sisters' teachings. They were like a voice calling in a land where no one lives. When winter came, the entire world was black and white. Without, the snow and the bare trees — or

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the blacker pines and firs; within, white, echoing rooms, where silent, black-clad figures moved. The sight filled her with grief, and by contrast called to mind her bright-gowned, beautiful mother.

When spring came, she was so pale and thin that the kind sisters would have sent word of her condition to her parents, had it not been expressly stated that no word was to be sent to disturb the peace of the Istrian home.

When she was seventeen, the sisters decided that she was sufficiently instructed in the duties of the order to be made a member. Obediently she took the veil and the vow of silence. This occasioned no fresh grief, since it could not interfere with her source of happiness — her dreams.

In the spring of the following year, shortly after vespers, when she was in her room alone, she heard some one playing upon a lute a melody of enchanting rhythm. Hastily she unfastened the window square.

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### SACRED RELICS OF ST. EUTHYMIUS

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In the melody floated, with the breath of the soft spring night. It came from the lake. She vibrated pleasurable to it. In it were poured out the longing heart of youth and the soft allurements of love. Instinctively she threw off the cloak and hood. She unclasped the black mantle at her throat. In her eyes, upon her face, glowed that look of inspired joy with which La Fiorita had held her admirers. Snatching the lute from the wall, she repeated the melody and improvised an answer. The unknown musician understood and followed her lead. Thus they conversed for an hour through the medium of music.

The next morning Elsbeth was summoned to the Superior. Some of the sisters said that they had heard music in the night coming from her room, and of a kind not suitable for convent walls. Had not years of silence lamed their tongues and made them incapable of utterance, they would have been eloquent in their description of

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the melodies they had heard. As it was, they insisted vehemently upon their wickedness.

“My daughter,” said the Superior, “since this is the first complaint against you, you shall go unpunished. We have shown forbearance because of your youth. Now that you are older, and have become one of us permanently, it is right that you should obey the rules and uphold them. In the future play sacred music, or such as befits the vows you have taken.” With this the Superior dismissed her.

It was later that night when the lute called beneath her window. Her answer was a sharp note of warning. The unseen musician understood. When again he touched the strings, it was midnight, and the shy summer stars had been hours a-twinkle. He played the same alluring cantilena, but softly, tenderly, as if meant for a loved one’s ears alone. He swept the strings so delicately it was but a breath of musical fragrance upon the night.

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Elsbeth trembled. The blood coursed pleasurabley through her veins. Her soul expanded with joy. Fear was forgotten. She thought only of the unseen one upon the lake who called to her.

He had understood what she said the night before. He had come again. She took her lute and replied clearly and daringly. Then again the soft melodic whisper floated up from the water. Her answer was firm and triumphant, shrilling on one sustained crystal note of longing. This passionate appeal for life, for freedom, touched the hearer's heart, as the murmurous caress which followed proved.

Six years had passed since any one had spoken to her like that, six silent years of convent life. She was like one buried alive, calling out to the warm, sweet world on the other side of the grave. Her lute told this in a song of unrest.

The next day there was a solemn meeting of the sisters in the great audience hall of

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## SACRED RELICS OF ST. EUTHYMIUS

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St. Euthymius. Sister Seraphita had heard the music. She had awakened the others, who, in their turn, awakened the Mother Superior. Never had their unworldly ears heard sounds like these. They plunged them into an alien world, where they trembled. They troubled their minds with the tone-pictures they flashed upon the senses. The music concealed a persistent suggestion that there are nobler things than a life of prayer and penance. It brought back memories of forgotten days. It touched their arid hearts to strange tremors. It sent a-flutter insistent voices as the sea sends abroad upon the wind the story of its secret longing. It gave transient energy to dead instincts. It set vibrating thoughts inimical to convent life. The stupidest among them felt this, and they agreed that it must be stopped.

In addition, it had been whispered that it sounded as if two lutes were being played, instead of one. Of course, they knew that

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that was impossible. No one could gain entrance to the convent. If they did hear two lutes, who was it who played the other one?

A look of awful comprehension brightened their dull old eyes. It was marvelous playing, too. They remembered that. Even the Superior said that she had not heard its equal. No mortal fingers swept that other lute. No mortal fingers could so fill the castle with resonance. There *were* two lutes! Who played the other? It was Satan who did it — Satan and none other!

Then the Superior recalled what she had heard of the music and dancing madness that had taken possession of the nuns of the south of France in the early years of the church. How it had been proved to be the work of Satan and how the evil spirit had been exorcised. Abbé X—— had written a book about it. After discussing the subject, Elsbeth was sent for.

“My dear daughter,” began the Superior,

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"it grieved me to learn of your disobedience. I, together with the sisters, have decided that forfeiture of the lute is a just punishment. Sister Seraphita may now bring it to my room and hang it upon the wall. As for you, my daughter, I recommend the prayers for the penitent." Then she rose, signifying that the session was at an end.

Elsbeth said nothing. Her mind was so filled by the occurrences of the past days that the meaning barely reached her.

That night the melody floated up to where she stood waiting, just as the sickle of the moon swung to a level with the black tree-tops.

How could she answer now? Hastily she unfastened the window. Then she remembered a lace handkerchief belonging to her mother, which she picked up the day they took her away. It was filmy and light. It would float upon the water. He would see it fluttering down. In one corner was em-

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broidered, in the colored needlework of the day, the crest of the house of Radknothy.

The changed music that came told her that he had caught the handkerchief. He understood the message. In the answering tones there was something deferential.

Then he played the melody of the first night, modulating it masterfully, and using the theme as the basic idea for many a sweetly extemporized caprice. As she stood alone in the dim cell listening, while the warm spring night caressed the short, bright curls upon her head, it thrilled her with a joy that was akin to pain. It was like the memory of something that had vanished — a tragic past that had swept her away upon billows of flame. It was the sense-memory of a past whose incidents she could not recall, but whose fervor flashed upon her.

The sisters heard the music. One by one, softly, they crept to the Mother Superior's door to see if she were awake. There she

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sat, a terrified, trembling old figure, her eyes staring at the lute upon the wall, while her pale lips murmured a prayer. One by one they peered in to make sure that the lute was really there, hanging motionless upon the wall. Yet its music echoed down the long corridors and floated in at the windows. A ghastly procession they made! Shrunken and hollow of cheek, toothless, yellow and wrinkled of face! The candles silhouetted sharply and distorted their bald and trembling heads.

Yes, there was the lute, motionless, just where Sister Seraphita had hung it. Yet they could hear its music. What a horrible thing! To listen to music made by a lute hung out of reach upon a wall! Their shrunken chins and toothless lips trembled. Their knees knocked together. It was all their old, weak hands could do to hold the candles.

Here was proof of the work of the evil spirit. Every sister in the convent was a

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witness. Perhaps it was Satan himself who swept the strings. In addition, they had heard that the coming of an evil spirit is accompanied by a breath of cool air or a freshening breeze. Whenever the wind came stronger, the music was noticeably louder. That was another proof.

The next day and the next were given over to prayer. But each night the same dreadful thing occurred, the same luxurious and sinful melody came floating on the midnight. The aged sisters were distracted. They were grieved, too. No scandal had ever touched St. Euthymius.

On the fourth day they met in solemn council, to which Elsbeth was summoned, in order to be questioned. She said that each night, in accordance with the Superior's orders, she had gone early to bed after repeating thrice the prayers for the penitent. Quickly she fell asleep. Then she dreamed — but so vividly that the following day she was unable to tell the dream from reality.

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— that the Mother Superior came to her door, knocked softly, opened it and held out the lute. She took it and improvised upon it the rest of the night. Softly then again the knocking came, the Superior opened the door, took the lute and went away. Each night she dreamed the same dream. And each morning she found her door as she had left it.

On hearing this the good sisters were more puzzled than ever. One thing, however, was certain. Elsbeth was the medium through which the evil spirit gained entrance. Through her he was trying to draw the Mother Superior into his toils, and thus work the ruin of the convent.

After sifting conflicting opinions, they decided that she should be confined within her room for a month. During that time she was not to see nor hold converse with any one. Food and drink would be placed at her door at regular intervals.

The first days of confinement were lonely.

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The lute was gone. There was nothing for company. Nor did the first week of confinement have any effect upon exorcising the demon. Each night the trembling old women gathered in the Superior's room to watch with terrified eyes while the motionless lute made music.

Elsbeth's only amusement was to stand on tiptoe and look out through the swinging square of the window. It was so high that she could not see anything immediately below. One day while she was standing on tiptoe peering out, her knees, trembling with the strain, struck a projection of the grooved wood, and she felt the wall yield as if a door were there.

Getting down on her knees, she scrutinized every curve of the decorative wood to see if a spring could be found. She knew the room had belonged to the old Baron who built the castle, and that it was unlike the others. Since the hidden spring — if such an one there were — did not disclose

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itself to the eye, she determined to follow with her fingers every scroll of the panel, pressing evenly upon each in turn.

About half-way up to the lower edge of the window, at about the height where her knees had been, a whorl of polished wood slipped from sight. The panel swung out and the level lake lay before her. Leaning out, she found that the stairway which she had seen from the edge of the water was within reach. This was the old Baron's place of secret exit.

That night, when the unknown serenader touched his lute, she opened the door, swung lightly to the stair top and motioned silence. The listening sisters, who heard the music begin, then cease abruptly, were filled with thankfulness. After waiting an hour and hearing no recurrent sound, they crept back to their beds, secure in the thought that the exorcising of the demon had begun.

In a little boat at the foot of the stairs sat a man holding a jeweled lute. It seemed



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to Elsbeth that she had always known him. He looked just like the men with whom she had been acquainted for years in her dreams. Like them, he was dark and young. Like them, too, he was handsome and had come to fetch her in a boat. He wore the costume of an Hungarian nobleman of the middle of the sixteenth century: a light blue mantle fancifully braided, of Polish cut, thrown coquettishly over one shoulder, called in those days *kabodion*; black velvet breeches, a round-topped hat and a tight-fitting dress coat, such as were worn by men of birth, called *mente*. Years of silence had thrown her so completely upon herself for companionship that it had become difficult to tell the real from the unreal. The one who waited in the boat was merely a proof of the reality of dreams.

He, on his part, saw a girl-woman of magnificent proportions coming swiftly down the steps. Upon her head a halo of little curls shone in the light. Her face was very

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white, but in her eyes there was the look with which La Fiorita had gone to meet her lovers. So familiarly did she hasten to him that he felt himself drawn within the magic circle of her day dreams, where nothing was impossible, and held out his hands impulsively to help her to a seat.

Yet, how can any one tell in what other life we have met, how close the tie that bound us, whose fibers vibrate on in this!

“Where shall we go?” he asked, admiration shining in his eyes.

“Down there, around the bend of the lake, where the sisters cannot hear our voices.”

He bent to the oars, and a silver furrow stretched behind them. Meanwhile Elsbeth looked attentively at her companion. His youth pleased her. He was the only one she had met who was young like herself.

Prince Ràkoczi was about twenty-eight. He had been married some years to an Italian woman many years his senior. The Princess — known as the Princess of the

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Bloody Heart, because of a heart of rubies which she invariably wore — was descended from the Italian house of Montanelli. The head of this house was known throughout Europe for the making of skillful and artistic instruments of torture. It was due to her father, Alonzo Montanelli, that in that age murder had reached the dignity of a fine art, and was accompanied by the exquisite decorative setting that befits a fête. The name, Montanelli, was password to every torture chamber of Europe.

Once around the bend, she said: "Where are we going?"

"To my chapel yonder."

"Shall we be alone?"

"Quite alone."

"Then I will play upon your lute."

"You shall have another like it for yourself," he said, handing it toward her, while the moon found the heart of a crimson stone and flashed red light upon his hand.

At sight of the richly lighted chapel, her

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eyes shone like a little child's at sight of a Christmas tree. So great was her capacity for happiness that she forgot the past in the pleasure of a moment.

He led her into the chapel. "You cannot imagine what I thought when I first saw you. I thought that you were the original of a picture that hangs here. That Magdalene is not a painter's dream. It is the portrait of the woman whom my father loved. During my mother's life the picture was not hung. It was only after I came into possession of the estate that it was taken from its place of concealment. It is La Fiorita, a dancing girl whom my father knew in Venice in his youth." Looking up, Elsbeth saw a voluptuous Venetian beauty, whose face stirred vague memories.

When they rowed back to the convent, the moon was low in the sky. The lake was dull and tarnished. In the tops of the trees a crisp wind shivered that told of dawn.

During the days that followed, Elsbeth

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was glad of her imprisonment. She escaped the sisters' prying eyes. They who live in solitude are skilled in reading the heart.

Each night the Prince came for her, and they drifted down the lake, explored its recesses, improvised upon their lutes within the chapel, or reclined upon the steps to talk of love. In this way a month passed away.

To the good sisters of St. Euthymius the month had brought comfort. The evil spirit was controlled and put to flight. They could sleep in peace, their timid old hearts untroubled by fear. Now the lute hung silent upon the wall. There had been no recurrence of the melody. The prayerful penance of Elsbeth had exorcised the demon.

The Superior called a council. It was agreed that Elsbeth should spend another month in prayer and silence. When the word was brought to her, she received it humbly. The Superior's heart was filled with gratitude. Her patience was bearing fruit.

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One night, after the beginning of the second month, when Elsbeth and Prince Rákoczi entered the chapel, he rushed to fasten the door that communicated with the castle.

"Why do you do that?" inquired Elsbeth.

"The Princess has arrived. Of course there is little danger of her coming here. Yet it is best to be safe."

Then they forgot about her in their love and joy in each other, and set about perfecting plans for Elsbeth's escape from the convent.

"Listen, little one," the Prince continued, drawing her to him, while the candles struck rich colors from his braided *kabodion* and accented the pallor of his face. "It is arranged for to-morrow night. A larger boat and two oarsmen will come for us here. They will row us to the end of the lake. There an old servant will await us with a carriage. He will take you to a hunting lodge of mine, to the east of here,

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near the Bohemian Forest. There, as soon as I can make arrangements, I will join you, and together we will go to Italy. I have a present for you for to-morrow night, too — a dress and a jewel, brought all the way from Stamboul. You shall put it on, and we will celebrate our marriage here at the altar — ”

“What was that — a knock?”

“Yes.”

“The Princess?”

“It must be. No one else would come. We must be quick. I will get into that chest there, beneath the picture. Turn the jeweled fruit to the right. That locks it. Then go to the altar and say your prayers. If she questions you, your quick wits must frame an answer.”

When Elsbeth unbolted the door, a tall, gaunt woman approaching middle age swept in. She wore a long, dark, cloaklike garment of *morit*, and a violet-colored *kazabajka*, while her hair was partially hidden

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beneath a white *csepesz*. Suspended from her neck was a ruby heart. She had narrow, side-glancing eyes, a long oval face, and thin lips. Her expression indicated cruelty.

“My fair nun, how came you here—and at this hour?”

“Most gracious Princess,” replied Elsbeth, bending in salutation, “last night I had a dream in which I saw The Virgin of the Red Girdle poise in the air above the Rákoczi chapel. That, as the gracious Princess knows, bodes ill. I made a vow to avert the ill by prayerful intercession at the altar.”

“And you chose night, good sister, for your beneficent purpose?”

“By day, most gracious Princess, I am occupied with convent duties. Therefore I sacrifice to it the hours of sleep.”

“But the Prince—does he help you? Where is he?”

“The Prince? Your Highness will see that I am at my prayers alone, and with

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your gracious permission I will return to them."

The Princess made a signal of dismissal, and Elsbeth knelt with her rosary at the altar.

Princess Ràkoczi was too astute and too well versed in the intrigues of that subtle age to take the nun's smoothly spoken words at their face value. She saw, too, that the nun was a woman of great beauty. The disfiguring garb could not hide that. She made a tour of the chapel. Around the outer edge, at the base of the walls, were placed coffers in which the church silver, the reliques, and the priestly vestments were stored. From time to time, as she made this tour of inspection, she glanced sharply at Elsbeth, to see if she were intent upon her beads. When she had completed the circuit, she paused at Elsbeth's right and bent to look at the gem-decorated carving of the chest that stood beneath the picture of La Fiorita. As she bent down, she heard

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a sharp sound. Looking up, she saw that the rosary had dropped upon the marble altar and that the nun's hands were trembling.

"I have found him!" she thought. "What a lesson I will teach them!" Jealous rage pinched her pale features to a cruel thinness. Aloud she said: "Good sister, I thank you for your unselfish watchfulness."

Elsbeth rose and remained bowing while the Princess passed out. When she had been gone a sufficient time for safety, the nun bolted the door and released the Prince.

"You shall not have another experience like this!" he said, clasping her in his arms.

"But to-morrow night?"

"She would not spy upon us two nights in succession."

On the way across the lake, the sparkles of light upon the water were not more numerous than the words of love which he lavished upon Elsbeth. They erased from her mind the disagreeable occurrence. She

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thought only of the morrow, of escape—and of the gorgeous gown and the jewel that had come from Stamboul.

As soon as they left the chapel, the Princess had the door unbolted, and entered, followed by two men bearing a chest identical in size and design with the one that stood beneath the picture. In obedience to her command they exchanged them, and took the former chest back to the castle.

The next night found Elsbeth on the stairs waiting eagerly. When Prince Rákoczi came, she took the package he gave her and ran back to her room. When again she came out, she wore a short white satin princess dress, heavily embroidered in seed pearls. It was cut low and square at the neck, and flared at the bottom. It resembled in style and cut the votive robes made for statues of the Virgin. About her neck was a cross of diamonds. The convent cloak was thrown over her arm, to be used in case of need.

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No sooner had they entered the chapel and seen to the safe bolting of the door, than with kisses and caresses he led her to the picture of La Fiorita. Moving a few steps away, he paused and looked at her.

“You cannot imagine how greatly you resemble that picture. In certain ways the faces are identical. The difference is that you have not lived so much. That is the woman my father loved. This is the woman whom I love. As she was the grief of his life, you will be the happiness of mine —” An imperative knock interrupted him.

Elsbeth donned the cloak and hood, drawing it carefully over the whiteness of her gown. Then she unbolted the door. Graciously the Princess entered.

“My good sister, I am going to take you from your prayerful duties for a few moments to-night to gratify a curiosity of mine.”

“I shall be most happy to serve you, Gracious Princess,” murmured Elsbeth.

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"I have heard," she continued, "that beneath the fingers of a pure woman the opal loses its angry fire and becomes white like a pearl. It is my wish to find out if that is true. Now on that chest there—the one beneath the repentant Magdalene—opals are set. You, of course, having had no occasion to observe the chest, have not seen them. I will make the test in the light of this candle, if you will come. Now observe the decoration on the chest front, a procession of wise men bearing offerings to the infant Christ. It was designed and made by Maestro Benedetto da Majano and is well-nigh priceless. Notice the rich softness of the wood — its depth of color. Do you see how it poises between the shades of brown and red? Look at that kneeling figure there, holding up a plate filled with fruit. The fruit in the center of the plate is made of opals. Now place your finger upon the central one, the apple. It represents, I fancy, the forbidden fruit of the tree of life.

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“That’s right. That’s right. Remarkable! Remarkable! It has grown pale—see! So have you, good nun. Why is that? Why does your hand tremble? Hold it more firmly, that I may see. There!—there!—Now press your fingers on that central stone.”

Elsbeth obeyed. As she did so, a shriek rang out, so heartrending, so horrible, it curdled the blood. Again a shriek of mortal anguish — then silence.

Above her, stern and erect, Princess Ràkoczi towered, her thin face illumined by the pointed candle. Without a word she gathered up her rustling robe and walked away.

When she had gone, Elsbeth lifted the chest lid. “Merciful God!” she cried. “Help! Help! Help!” Again and again she called, until her throat felt numb and weary.

When she pressed her finger to the opal, she had touched a spring that released

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round, needle-like darts of steel, which had been concealed beneath the satin lining. The body within was shredded into ribbons. In the space of a moment it had become an unrecognizable mass of pulp. Across it lay a silver heart, shining dimly, and beside it two tiny marble Cupids held chains of roses, which were dotted with blood.

Madly she grasped the steels, attempting to tear them away. But she succeeded only in making deep wounds in the palms of her hands. She ran to the castle door, determined to have revenge. The door was fastened on the other side. When she beat upon it and tried to call for help, she found she could not speak. Her throat was paralyzed. She was dumb.

The next morning, when the sisters of St. Euthymius came to tell her that they had decided to release her from her confinement, they found her lying upon her bed, robed in white satin and pearls, a cross of diamonds upon her breast. When they spoke to her in

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their astonishment at the sight that met their eyes, and asked for an explanation, she pointed to her mouth. They understood. She had taken the vow of eternal silence. Then she held up her hands. The palms were dotted with spots of red. They fell upon their knees in reverence and adoration, crying: “A miracle! *The stigmata!* *The stigmata!*” They saw, too, that her face was changed, and that her hair was streaked with white.

For the remainder of her life, which lasted twenty-five years, Saint Elsbeth was never known to break her vow of silence.

The white robe and the diamond cross which came down from heaven when she was made the bride of Christ possessed greater healing efficacy than any relics in Hungary. Their power was oftenest called into service by maidens and young lovers, until Saint Elsbeth became the patron saint of the heart. Through these relics Saint Euthymius became the richest convent in

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all Hungary and the most widely known
for the piety of its inmates.

There are certain days of midsummer
when the convent is gratuitously open to
the public. Then the room with its tiny
window overlooking the lake is shown,
where the miracle was wrought, and the
white satin robe and diamond cross came
down from heaven to honor Saint Elsbeth,
who was the bride of Christ.

THE OPAL ISLES

*Vivere ardendo è non sentire il malo!*¹

GASPARA STAMPA.

(To live intensely, to be impervious to wrong!)

WE were sitting over our after-dinner cigars, my host, Gustav Berençy, and myself, when the conversation touched on love. Without pausing to consider the effect of the question or its evident infringement of guest-right, I boyishly asked him why he had never married.

Gustav Berençy had been the friend of my grandfather. They had known each other in Paris in their youth. I remembered hearing my grandfather say that Berençy was not only the handsomest, but the most distinguished man he had met. Looking out upon the luxurious park-setting of his seaside

¹ From "Rime di tre gentil donne."

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home, I could not help wondering why he had always lived alone.

As I asked the question, I saw that the eyes looking into mine were dimmed for a moment, as if by a veil of grief.

"I *am* unmarried," he replied; "not by the law of man, but by something more sacred — the law of the heart, which is God's law."

"I beg your pardon," I hastened to make reply, repenting of the ill-timed question. "I had not heard of your marriage, nor indeed," I added, "of your wife's death."

"No, of course not," was the answer, "because I do not know myself whether she is alive or dead. In all these years I have not been able to tell. She is here with me, in the great room there above," indicating with his hand a wing of the house.

"I do not believe I understand," I murmured awkwardly, trying to hit upon a fitting answer.

"Very likely you do not, because I do not." Grief like a shadow flitted across his face.

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For the moment it looked aged and strangely weary.

“Of course you do not understand, because I do not. For fifty years she has been there — in that room. For fifty years my heart has not wavered in its allegiance to her, and yet I do not know, as I have told you, whether she is alive or dead.”

We sat in silence, while my host looked reminiscently out across the sea, as if somewhere in its spaces he sought the mystery’s solving. A sensation of fear swept over me, which, however, I controlled upon the instant. I was ashamed of my folly. This genial, courtly gentleman was not mad. In the eyes that looked into mine there was none of the maniac’s frenzy. On the contrary, they were gently meditative, and pregnant with thought and grief.

“No,” he said, reminiscently, lighting a fresh cigar, whose white smoke in the gentle evening floated up and blended aureole-like with the thick whiteness of his hair, “no, I

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do not mind telling you why I have never married, as the world puts it. It is a strange story. I doubt if you will believe it. But you are leaving on the morrow, and I shall never see you again. Besides, I am old, you know. I am eighty."

With a sad smile he waved aside my polite demurrer. "Fifty years is long enough to keep a secret, is it not?" he continued. "And it might be well in after years for some one to know the truth. It might help her."

Involuntarily my thoughts flew to the great silent room above, where for fifty years the woman had lain who was neither alive nor dead. Little did I guess what was housed there, as my heart beat eagerly with anticipation.

"I was born, as you know, in France," said my host. "My mother died at my birth. My childhood was spent in a monastic school on the gloomy coast of La Bas Bretagne. There I did not see much child-

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ish merriment, as you may imagine. Shortly after graduating, when the subject was being discussed as to whether or not I, the younger son, should take holy orders—and at that time of my impressionable youth I was not greatly averse to the idea, so accustomed had I become to monastic discipline—my father and my brother died, leaving me heir to the name and fortune. Thus duty, rather than inclination, kept me in a world of which at that time I knew nothing.

“Finding the loneliness of the old home unendurable, I went to Paris. There I saw something of life. When at length dissipation palled upon me, I gave myself over to study and to art. It was then that I met your grandfather. Finally, I determined to make the *grand tour*, which in those days was *de rigueur* for young men of wealth and position. I sauntered across Europe, pausing wherever caprice seized me, idled carelessly across Asia, dallying with my art the while, reached its eastern coast, and found myself

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confronted by the great Pacific. Here, not knowing what else to do, but without a definite goal in view, I took passage for a cruise among the islands of Polynesia. Some months later, when I had satisfied my curiosity in regard to the South Seas, just after leaving the Austral Isles, a typhoon struck us and we were wrecked upon an out-lying coral reef. The steamer was virtually cut in two. The entire crew were drowned with the exception of the first mate, one sailor, and myself.

"We were swept by the fury of the waves upon a high white beach, where a group of natives who had seen the wreck were waiting for the storm to subside, with the intention of plundering the ship. I found that we had merely exchanged one form of death for another and a crueler one. We were seized, bound hand and foot, and thrown upon the ground to await the tribe's decision of our fate upon the morrow. That night, while I lay awake wondering what the outcome

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would be, a young native woman, whose sinewy strength had caught my eye during the day, slipped up to where I lay alone at a distance from the others, and with incredible swiftness cut the thongs that bound me. Putting her finger to her lips significantly, she motioned me to follow. One fate was as bad as another, if they all meant death, and I did not hesitate.

“She went across the island, walking so swiftly that it was all that I could do to keep up. Not once did she look back, or seem to think of me. She went straight on, as if impelled by fear. I have no idea how far we walked. When at length she paused with a gesture that made me know that the journey was at an end, the day was not far off. We had crossed the island, and again the sea lay before us.

“The shore was different here. It was repellent and stern, like the coast of La Bas Bretagne which I had known in my gloomy childhood. Rocks sloped in sharp declivity

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to the water, which looked threatening and black.

“Going up to one of the rocky walls, she pointed to an opening beneath, and went in a little way, motioning me to follow. There I saw a stairway hewn from the living rock, and descending into the bowels of the earth. Although it seemed at first glance to be perpendicular, it sloped slightly toward the water, at whose edge we had entered, so I knew that whatever pathway lay beyond must lead beneath the sea.

“She crouched down upon the stair beside me and, stretching out one long bare arm, pointed down, down, down — once, twice, thrice — meaning that there I must go. Then she took from her back a bag-shaped basket and handed it to me. In it were food and drink.

“Like a whirr of yellow swords, the first sun-rays pierced the sky. As if frightened to see the day so soon, she bounded up the stairs and was gone. To go back meant

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death; to go on meant I knew not what. But the chance of a life hung in the balance, so I went on.

“The stairs led downward between smooth walls of rock. How far I do not know. I counted the steps until I could count no longer. My brain grew dizzy and refused to work. I sat down and buried my face in my hands to recover poise. I got up and went on, and again my brain refused to count the infinite steps. Again I had to give it up.

“The opening above, which for a time shed light plentifully upon me, became a distant pin-point, then vanished, and inky blackness surrounded me. I should have felt like one buried alive, had it not been for the fresh air that swept between the perpendicular walls of this canal-way.

“But what awaited me at the bottom? Was it water, black and silent and of fathomless depth — impassable, mysterious water that had never reflected the stars or the sun? Was I to find myself upon the edge of an

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abyss whose depth I could sense but could not estimate?

“What torturing fear and suspense did I not suffer, as I descended that frightful stairway! Suppose my foot slipped and I should fall! What then! But she, my guide of the night, had motioned that I was to follow the stairway. She had not crossed the island merely to bring about my death. It was her intention to save me. I must have faith in her. There was no other way. I summoned fresh courage and crept down the blackness.

“I lost all account of time as hours go. But judging by my weariness and hunger when I reached the level, I think I must have put in a good part of a day in descending that frightful stairway. At the bottom I found myself in a smooth and level road enclosed between walls of granite.

“But the silence and the darkness — how can I tell you what they were? Such silence drives men mad. The darkness was like velvet in its black impenetrableness. It

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seemed to fall upon my face and stifle me. Nothing disturbed the silence. Even the wind slipped noiselessly through this grave of granite. And it had come so far that it had freed its wings of the scents of the world of light, of the sea and of the earth. No message from the world above came here. Not a sound broke the silence. From the walls of barren rock no dust clods fell to tell of the ceaseless, weaving life of the earth. Adown their sides no water tinkled. Along the road there was not even the friendly whirr of a dried leaf blown by the wind. Nothing! Nothing!

“After I had traveled for a time and the silence had heaped its leaden weight upon me, I shrieked. I could restrain myself no longer. I cried out with all the strength of lung that I possessed, and the granite walls sent back a million, broken-voiced echoes to beat about my ears.

“For days I traveled on like this, pausing only to eat and sleep. I had lost reckoning

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of time, of night, of day. I heard only the measured sound of my own steps. I do not know how many days and nights had passed like this, when I found that the road was leading upward. It became narrower and steeper. I brushed the rock walls as I walked; I could scarcely squeeze between them. I did not fear. The sound of my steps had dulled my brain. Darkness had paralyzed the power to think.

“Above my head the roof lowered till I could no longer stand erect. I fell upon my knees and crept forward. The wind changed; it freshened. I thought it brought a scent of the sea. Suddenly thick leaves barred the way. I brushed through them, and the star-splendid circle of a tropic night swept into view.

“I was in the garden of a spacious residence that crowned an elevation. Below me a white city lay, and around and beyond the sea. How I drank in the air! How I rejoiced in the sleepy rustle of leaves and



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grass, and in the regained face of the earth!

“The city which presented itself to my eyes was arranged in the form of a wheel, whose hub was the dwelling in the garden where I stood. From the dwelling the streets radiated like spokes, and at the end of each, terminating at the island’s edge, shone the sea. Around the eminence spread a circular park of considerable breadth, adorned with flowers and statues. Around this lay a smooth wide road, bordered at regular intervals with slender palms, whose leaves in the windless night were motionless. Opposite, the city streets began, and each was headed by a building of great beauty, so that beyond the park and the roadway rose a circular sweep of noble buildings. At regular distances from the central starting-point, each street was interrupted by a small circular space of greensward, and these, uniting, made a driveway around the city.

“I chose at random one of the paths that

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intersected the garden and followed it. Since I was the toy of chance, I determined to resign myself bravely. After a detour the path led toward the dwelling, blended with one of its marble walks, and ended at the foot of a staircase. I climbed the stairs and entered an uncovered corridor of white marble. After walking to the end, I found it closed by a smooth and rounded stone. I touched it. It swung open, enfolding and sweeping me within its circle, and then closed silently behind me. Impenetrable draperies of silk hung in front of me, brushing my face. I parted them and entered the strangest room I ever saw.

"It was long and of unusual height. The top was uncovered and let in the tropic night. Around the edge of the top of the walls a rim of opal glass projected, upon which a glass ceiling was folded back, to be used in case of need. There were no pictures in the room, nor were there decorations or adornment of any kind. The four walls

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were hung uniformly in curtains of heavy white silk, which fell in straight folds to the floor.

"There was no air moving. Indeed, I remembered the night outside to have been singularly windless. Yet these white curtains shivered and swayed with a sibilant and silken murmur. Across their surface gold lines and figures swept. An endless chain of golden phantoms girdled the spacious chamber. From the walls bright forms leaped with a burst of light, and then faded back to whiteness. Round and round swept a glittering, changing pageant, impalpable and soundless. Sometimes the gold within the witch-wrought silk blazed forth until the air gleamed with yellow light that dimmed the stars. Anon it paled to such a vague misty radiance as engirdles a winter moon. But always there was change and light and motion and the rustle of swayed silk. If I examined the curtains closely, if I took them up in my hands, I found that they were colorless and

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uniformly white. But if I let them fall again, and stepped a foot away to look at them, gold light and flashing form leaped out to startle me.

“There were times when the gold wall-light faded and a dim brilliancy took its place. Occasionally, too, a silver light inspirited the restless curtains, pallid frost-shine filled the room, and horizontal lines of silver swept round the walls. When the silver lines grouped themselves into form and being, it was as if lustrous spirits danced airily a ghost dance of joy, now flashing for an instant into vivid life, now paling and fading into silver mist that still retained their gracious contours.

“There was no furniture save a long, narrow, bed-like pedestal or support of ivory, which stood in the center of the room. Upon this rested a mammoth sickle likewise of ivory, formed like the new moon, and within its hollow curve there lay — how shall I tell you! — was it a woman wrapped in lustrous

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gauze, or was it a mammoth opal that bore a woman's form? Standing beside the figure and looking down, I could not tell. Beneath the pallid surface colors glowed like tint of flesh with jewels upon it. Again, they seemed to be only the fiery flash of an opal's heart, and the surface became icily cold.

"I discovered plainly once or twice the long, noble lines of a figure relaxed as if in sleep. Within the white stone floated the gracious semblance of a woman, yet far away and insubstantial, like colors seen in a dream. Sometimes I thought the figure breathed, but by the light of those moving curtains I could not tell. They kept up such a tremor of shifting brightness that my own body became unreal and no longer seemed to belong to me. They dazzled my senses and broke my chain of reasoned thinking. I was adrift with nothing to guide me. When at length I turned from contemplation of the mysterious figure to find again, if possible, the place of exit, in the wall-labyrinth of

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weaving light, some power which I could not but obey compelled me to pause on a sudden and look back.

“There, standing upright by the moon’s ivory horn, was the opal woman. The tangling gauze which covered her — which I had not dared to touch to find if it were gauze or the smooth cold surface of a stone — had slipped to her feet, where it billowed white like foam. She was taller than the average woman and more slender, yet withal muscularly built and round. Hers was the body of Pallas.

“An apron-like corselet of flexible gold, woven in open-work squares, fitted her smoothly, falling evenly to her feet, but opened to the waist on either side. Beneath this from the waist downward fell something silken and white, softening the sharp outline of the gold. In each little open-work square of the corselet hung a pink gem, and between her breasts was set a ruby.

“Her hair, which was thick and of a bronze

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color, was arranged in great coils on either side of her head, completely covering her ears. In the center of each coil shone a ruby that matched in size and color the one between her breasts. From these rubies, and attached to them, extended a net of tiny pearls, covering her hair and holding it securely in place.

“So absorbed was I in contemplation of her person, that I forgot that word was due from me. When at length I lifted my eyes to hers, it was as if along with the conquest of my senses the conquest of my mind had been completed. They seemed to enfold and sweep me within a sea of light where all things were foreign to my will.

“Notwithstanding her strange and fantastic costuming, which at once revealed and enhanced the beauty of her body, I knew that this was no vain coquette. This was not a woman to find pleasure in vulgar admiration. Her costume I felt to be the result of some ideal of life, of beauty, which

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was the ruling passion of her mind. Calmly and in silence we looked at each other. In my face surprise and admiration struggled. She, however, was undisturbed and looked back at me serenely.

"Even then, before a word had been exchanged between us, I felt that her life and her ideal of life were altogether dissimilar to my own, that mentally we were the opposite each of the other. Within her I sensed unsoundable depths of peace and calm, which had their origin in some mental possession to which I was an alien. I measured then the abyss that lay between us.

"She was as richly colored and as gorgeous as a canvas, yet in her bearing there was nothing that hinted of pride or self-consciousness. I shall never forget that first glimpse of her. The picture is printed indelibly upon my brain, despite the years that have intervened — so vividly, indeed, that nothing has been able to dim it. For me it has dulled all other visions. Judge of

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it by the fact that I had known more or less well the beauties of Paris, and that I was accustomed to the luxurious gowning of the French city. It was only a few seconds that we stood there, and yet — so vivifying is the power of beauty — it was time enough for a world of fancies to sweep my brain.

“Her eyes were two flowers set within the petaled pallor of her face. Wide, straight-fronting eyes of chastest blue they were, whose vivid vitality was softened by an inner and a spiritual flame. Her face symbolized the dream-white city which I had seen outside in the night. And the changing light-splendor of that wondrous room was caught up and concentrated there. As I stood looking at her, a thousand vague and vanishing glimpses of remembered loveliness came back to haunt me. There was something about her that shut off thought connection with the active world of fact, and set one adrift among the pages of the painters. Despite her slenderness and her purely wo-

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manly beauty she was strong and masterful. She suggested the “virile note of great art.”

“In silence I stood and waited for her to speak. In a voice whose calmness was like the azure flame within her eyes, she said:

“‘You were not going away, were you? Stay and be my guest. Besides, you know, you cannot go. There is no way.’

“‘Nothing could give me greater pleasure than to be your guest — for a time,’ I added.

“‘For a time?’

“‘Yes; then I must go back to Europe, to my home — to France.’

“‘Home? Yes, yes; of course — but how can you! You are in the Opal Isles.’

“‘And where are they?’

“A strange look crossed her face, but so swiftly that I could not tell whether it was perplexity or grief.

“‘The Opal Isles — they — they — are in the center of the shoreless sea where the white wave circles. And I am Asra.’

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“But there are steamers, of course; I can — ”

“Never mind to-night. That can wait, can it not?” She touched a hidden spring that summoned a servant. ‘The blue room.’ Then, turning to me, she said: ‘He will give you clothing suitable to our life and climate. Good night.’

“Good night,” I repeated in a daze.

After nearing the curtain behind which the servant had disappeared and stood waiting, I looked back. Asra lay silent and white, as I had first seen her, between the pale crescent’s ivory horns. Again she seemed to be not a woman, but a gigantic opal, beneath whose surface a rainbow slept. The curtains had begun their sibilant whispering again, and from them leaped gold phantoms in a dance of joy. Nearer and nearer to the ivory moon they circled. They formed a glittering cordon about it, weaving of bright motion a visible song of sleep. When the long curtains fell behind me, I thought: ‘Perhaps

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it has all been a dream.' I did not know. I could not tell.

"'This is the guest-room,' the servant said, breaking in upon my reverie. 'It tells of the supremacy of the sea. Here are your clothes. Good night.'

"The room was similar to the one I had left. Like it, it was roofless. Like it, too, it was walled in white silk. Within the silk slumbered not gold and silver, but the mysteries of the sea. I saw depth on depth of translucent water of every varying shade, running the entire gamut of blues and greens, within which gem-winged fish, slim silvery serpents, and strange iridescent sea-life swam. It was as if I looked through leagues of water, as one looks across a level prairie. Sometimes the water was blue and warm and pierced by sunlight. Again it was black-green and angry. Sometimes a cold light shivered this soundless ocean, a great wave came rolling in, crested with pale foam the color of fear. At the moment when it seemed

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ready to break and shed its tumbling waters over me, it vanished and the white silk trembled crisply. I remembered what Asra had said of the white wave that circles the shoreless sea. The servant, too, had spoken of the supremacy of the sea. I felt that in both expressions there was concealed a threat, or at least a deeper meaning. Unbidden came the thought that perhaps the Opal Isles and the people who dwelled within them were somehow at the mercy of the sea.

“When I stretched myself out upon the narrow ivory bed in the center of the room, I still continued to watch the curtains, in the dim wonder of approaching sleep. I was conscious of their beauty and their magic, but I no longer felt any desire to solve a mystery where all was mystery. As I fell asleep I wondered if I, too, would be transformed into an opal. Why not? Are we not all opals by day and night, white flesh opals beneath whose surface flashes the flame of imagination?

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“When I went downstairs the next day dressed in a white tunic worn after the manner of the Greek costume, I found that I had slept the greater part of the day. On the way a servant met me and led me to a room where Asra awaited me. She wore the wonderful costume of the evening before. The sight of her brought back the golden phantoms of which she seemed to be an embodied one. I wondered if, when I approached her, she would vanish and the pallor of space confront me. I had ceased to trust the testimony of my senses. But she stood there calmly smiling, the swinging pink corselet gems swaying with the movement of her breath.

“When I went up to her, she held out her hand frankly and wished me good morning. I was more surprised to find that she was real, that she did not vanish at my approach, than if, upon the instant, a dozen phantoms had leaped to take her place. The little hand within my own was warm and white. Here

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was the first reality. In gratitude I bent over it. As I lifted my head, bright sunlight swept in from the open side of the room and swathed her about like a robe. Color became sound. I saw then their relationship to fearlessness and joy.

“With the new clothes I put on a new life — a lighter, freer, happier life. The black-robed world which I had known seemed far away. Suddenly it seemed to have been a sort of slavery. I saw it fettered with restraints and prejudices. I saw it bowed of back and weary. I drew a deep breath as of one pleasantly released, as if prison doors had opened and shown me light.

“Laughing, Asra came to where I stood and clasped upon my upper arm a bracelet of opals.

“Now you are a subject of the Opal Isles! Now there is no retreat.’

“I looked down upon the glittering gems. Each stone was emitting sparklets of cold green light, as if in anger at me, an inter-

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loper. While I was watching almost in fear its malevolent shine, a servant entered and asked Asra if she wished to drive as usual at that hour. She looked toward me questioningly.

“‘Nothing could give me greater pleasure,’ I replied, to the unuttered question in her eyes. ‘I should like to see the city by day.’

“As we drove along, I saw that there were other cities and other islands, a dozen or more perhaps. They had been hidden from me the evening before by the luminousness of the night, which had made them a part of the distance. Between the islands little red-sailed boats fluttered, but nowhere was the long, black smoke-ribbon of a steamer to be seen.

“‘Where are the Opal Isles?’ I questioned, turning to Asra. ‘I never heard the name before. I’m sure I never dreamed of cities of white marble on the other side of the earth.’

“‘I told you last night,’ she replied eva-

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sively, ‘that they are in the center of the shoreless sea, where the white wave circles.’

“I fancied then, as I looked out across the shining water, that something white and ominous like foam bounded the far horizon. She followed my glance. When again she looked toward me, I thought that within her eyes I read fear, but the look vanished as quickly as it came, and the old serenity took its place.

“‘That does not tell me where I am — “in the center of the shoreless sea” — that only helps to lose me the more.’

“‘What difference does it make where one is, if one is happy? How could happiness be situated upon a map!’

“‘But are there no steamers, no seafaring vessels?’ I insisted, looking out beyond the islands where the smooth water stretched to the horizon, unfurrowed of prow or oar.

“‘Of course not! Why should there be? When one reaches the Land of the Ideal, where everything is exactly as one would have

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it, is it reasonable to suppose that any one would wish to go away?’

“‘Very true. But how do they get here?’

“‘How did you?’

“‘But I mean others. How do *they* get here?’

“‘There is only one road that can lead to a land like this. They who are fit find it.’

“‘But do not all roads lead two ways?’

“‘All but this one.’

“‘I yield. There is no use in questioning the Sphinx.’

“We were driving through streets lined with marble buildings and bordered on either side by smooth parkways. At frequent intervals along the greensward were statues, decorative urns, shrubs, and flowers. Each building, whatsoever its size, extent, or purpose, was a little work of art and formed a helpful part of the general grouping. Nowhere was there anything ugly or unsightly. Nowhere was there a false color or an immature line. It was as if the people had worked

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together with the single aim of making their city faultless. They seemed to know that ugly things are immoral.

"On the larger buildings I noticed that the decorations were frequently suggestive of the sea, as if in some remote age the city had risen from its depth. Carved upon the marble were shells, fish, trailing vines and weeds whose graceful sinuosities told of the swinging of tides. When we crossed one of the long spoke-like streets which swept from the center to the edge of the island, I saw that at its end, upon the turf that met it at right angles, there was a group of statuary. Asra told me that similar groups stood at the end of each street where it touched the sea. This group represented dancing nymphs pausing suddenly in the last wild round of some ecstatic dance, uplifted to toe-tips by motion-mad draperies, with muscles tense, up-strained to slimmest height, heads flung back, holding to their lips, trumpet-wise, fluted shells, through which they were fling-

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ing defiance at the deep. This picture stuck in my memory. It was like a pin prick of fear. In the smiling water it made me see a menace and a danger.

“There were buildings in the city which had a look of great age. They were yellow and mottled and streaked faintly with fine lines of gray. Their architecture was strange. It was simple and dignified, but as alien as the flora of an unknown land. The light fell upon these ancient buildings tenderly, with none of the harsh obtrusiveness of unshaded white. It was like a retrospective thought where unpleasant things seen in the flattering mirror of the past have lost their harshness. High above the city rose the grace of palms, and in all directions shone blue water.

“Then began a life which lasted too brief a time and which I have never ceased to regret; a life where all the standards of living were reversed. How shall I tell you?

“Beauty, not gold, was king! — the intelli-



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gent appreciation, the creation of beauty. They called it the spirit of life made visible. There was no religion, no church; in their stead they had placed fearlessness and joy and kindness. If you can imagine what the result would be to take away wealth as the objective goal of a nation's endeavor, you will gain an idea of what I mean.

"Gradually in our walks and drives, or in our sails upon the water, Asra instructed me in the new life, until I was beginning to forget the old. At least I had reached the point where there was no desire of return. I will not enter into tiresome details of the island people and their ways, because the most important part is what came later and its effect upon my life.

"Perhaps two weeks had elapsed since my arrival in the Opal Isles when Asra asked me to visit with her a little rocky islet, the farthest and most outlying of the Opal group, whence a fine view was to be had of the island cities, and the great sea to westward. At

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her suggestion, we took along a hamper of food, that we might spend the day if we wished. I managed the red-sailed boat, and we went alone.

“Rocky and grim the island rose from the water, like the summit of a mountain whose base had been submerged by the tides. Near the shore on one side, opposite the landing, stood a graceful little pavilion, a place of rest and shelter from the too direct rays of the sun. Within were seats and a table.

“At one end of the pavilion the rock walls were near and rose high above its roof. In the wind-sheltered crevices an airy blue flower grew that resembled the anemone. There were occasional ferns, too. Other vegetation there was none. The shore was strewn with dull, copper-colored seaweeds of sharply indented edges. They resembled hairy tentacles, long eager sea-arms reaching from the deep to drag us down.

“Asra wore the dress in which I had first seen her, the gold open-work corselet, with

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the swinging pink stones and giant rubies. As I looked at her, the light struck a flame from the ruby above her heart, and I noticed that its color was that of the crimson sail. I remembered how I had watched it upon the misty water, and how I had thought that it was the color of life, when life is lived bravely.

“I am glad of your mood to-day,” she said, divining my thoughts. “Why can you not always be like this? Why can you not always be dominant and fearless? That is the way to live. I do not understand you when you are sad.”

“Nor I myself.”

“Why is it then?”

“The mystery of things, perhaps. I do not know exactly. Perhaps it is because I wonder where I am.”

“What possible difference can place make if we are happy?”

“Perhaps it is because I fear the day will come when I must go away.”

“A deep light shone in her eyes. The

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thought flashed through my brain that here was such a face as dwells forever in the depth of our ideals.

“‘But why need you go? What is there in the old world that you want? Stay here with me.’

“‘Do you mean it, Asra?’ I cried, all but smothered with the joy that burst upon my senses.

“‘Yes, why not?’

“‘Then this life is mine forever!’ I exclaimed, hastening toward her, while she waved me gently away.

“‘To the fearless all things belong.’

“‘Asra!’ I cried, the wild joy still beating in my brain.

“Again she waved me away. ‘See!’ She spread a paper before me which she had taken from a slender chatelaine swinging from her waist. ‘This is the permission for me to choose whom I wish — you if I wish.’

“‘And you do wish, Asra?’

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“‘Otherwise would I have told you? It depends upon you. There are conditions. You must banish fear, doubt, sadness, forever. Do you understand? If you were unable, it would mean ruin — such ruin as you do not know. You must be sure of yourself.’

“‘Anything that lies within my power I will do. But is this within my power? Can I be sure? Can I know?’

“I looked out over the sea. The broad light fell full upon it, and a myriad merry eyes looked back at me. Its voice reached me. I listened. The meaning was unmistakable. It was the undying laughter of the pagan gods. At night, too, I remembered, its voice had reached me; and I shivered to think that it was a dirge then, that it sang an eternal dirge. And between these two voices of nature — the two voices that call forever, the laughter and the dirge — what was there? The ideal! Yes, the ideal, desirable and unattainable, forever, between the laughter and the dirge.

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“Now you have reached it!” she exclaimed, breaking in upon my thinking. ‘You were sure to. Now you will conquer. Put the other world behind you. Annihilate it with your fearlessness. Be mine!’

“Her face inspired me. Courage, like wine, strengthened my veins. I felt that I had been lifted into a high and rarefied element. The moments became lyric and sped onward with the lilt of song.

“I will not fail you. I will live with you upon your height of joy. I will prove that I am worthy.’

“I clasped her in my arms, and the face which was like the realization of a dream was near to mine.

“I knew it!” she exclaimed, disengaging herself gently from my embrace.

“For the moment I moved in an element of lightness and joy, freed from fear, superstition, and corroding care. I began to realize that joy is the most important thing in the world, the most pregnant of possibility

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and power. I saw a new world, a new sky, and a new earth. Beneath her mighty touch, I saw as if for the first time the face of the morning upon the level water. I looked across it. My fancy peopled with triumphant phantoms the immeasurable distances that lay beyond. Worlds on worlds sprung up in space over which joy floated like a victorious banner and whose roadways were threaded by the gleaming feet of love. I saw victorious and triumphant things; white arms up-flung, red lips that shrilled in song; bright helmet plumes blown back like flame; and between them the white, glorious face of the woman I loved. Joy had strung my mind to a finer pitch. It had given it temporarily the strength and the suppleness of steel. Like a thin and glittering sword of unbreakable metal, joy stood, unsheathed of grief and formidable forever, between me and the destructive forces of life. Nothing now could diminish my power. I had found that for which we are created.

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“Wherever the mysterious roads of life might lead, it was joy that waited for me at the end. All the beautiful, unalterable things in whose creation joy had been dominant came thronging to enrich my senses.

“‘You are right. Joy is the greatest thing in the world. It is the alkahest, the universal solvent, in which beauty becomes fluid, and, like a returning tide of ocean, flows in and makes fecund the barren coves and inlets of the soul.’

“‘Put away all that you have known in the past,’ she answered quickly. ‘Forget that there was ever another way of living, another land. Be mine wholly. If you are worthy, the reward will not be slight.’

“‘The past is as if it had not been. It is a tide that has slipped back again into the deep.’

“‘And it has washed away the writing on the sand. Look!’ She pointed to the sea. ‘Like its deep the soul is. Nothing can sully it.’

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“As a lark rises in space, its only connection with the dim earth being ribbons of fluted sound, so did my ecstatic vision rise and hold me high above, where petty griefs could not pull me down and where in my focusing point of light I could draw what I wished up unto myself.

“I promise, Asra.”

“Then I choose you,” she answered solemnly, a strange new note of warning ringing in her voice.

“I felt as if the horses of the sun had whirled me to the heights of light. Swift air lashed my ears. Glory inundated my senses. I felt the vertigo of happiness. I saw poise beneficently above me then the vision of love — the glittering, gold-cloud vision of love as it is painted by tone in the overture to *Lo-hengrin*. When it passed, the elastic swing of my vision, which had attained height sufficient to embrace all things, brought before me, by power of contrast, the black, autumn coast of La Bas Bretagne, as I had seen it

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in my gloomy childhood. The shore was strewn with rocks, like this one, and, perched upon them, much as was this gay pavilion, stood a church, somber and dark with age. Upon the tower a huge dark crucifix stood, whose black shadow fell far below. I saw again that cold autumnal sea; the slow-swinging ridges of dim water, where the black cross wavered, and between which poised black boats, over whose edges from time to time passed sadly the cold, silent creatures of the sea. The bright vision faded. I fell from my height of joy. It was as if I spun down infinitudes of space, light, like sound, ringing as I went.

“Asra, you swept me with you to a dizzy height, where, for a few moments, I saw the splendor of the worlds unfurl. But I cannot keep it. My eyes grow dim; my senses are blurred. A thousand fears assail me. I am afraid of the heights. I cannot live there calmly. I am not equal to it.”

“What do you mean?” Again there was
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that solemn note of warning that shook my soul.

“‘Do not fail me now. You do not realize what it would mean. You do not dream what would come.’

“Again I saw the cold gray sky of France. The dim water ridges again swung toward me, and upon them lay blackly the shadow of sorrow. Doubts and fears like a demon army fell upon me. They overcame me; they crushed me.

“‘Asra, what of that dark ocean whose name is death?’

“‘What of that!’ she replied in scorn. ‘I do not fear it. Put all such thoughts behind you. Be brave! Let us intoxicate ourselves with living, with fancies, dreams, exquisite sensations. The present cannot last. Therefore make it perfect. Since Life is a guest whom we may not ignore if we would, does it not behoove us to be royal entertainers?’

“No more could that impassioned voice

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arouse me, nor the eyes, that filled my soul with light. The earth had claimed me. Supinely I fell back upon its breast. Never again could she lift me to the heights.

“I am not worthy of you, Asra. Can you forgive me?” I said, folding her in my arms and pressing my lips to hers.

“When my lips touched hers, a change passed over her. She was standing close beside me, and yet she seemed to be distant, to have moved away.

“Oh, the folly! Why did you not listen to me! Why did you not bury yourself in your dream and forget! Why did you not content yourself with looking! There are things made only to dream of — that vanish at the touch. Good is not good until it is useless,’ she added enigmatically.

“The ideal must never be reached. *Look!*” Wildly her voice rang out.

“I followed the direction of her eyes and her pointing hand.

“The white wave!”

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“The sky-line was blurred beneath on-rushing water, white and thunderous and fearful.

“What does it mean, the white wave?”

“Did I not warn you? Come, save yourself while there is time!”

“She unclasped the bracelet from my arm and flung it down. She led me toward the rock that towered at the end of the pavilion. After walking some distance around its projection upon the sand, we came to a dark and narrow opening. There, handing me the food hamper, she said: ‘Go straight ahead! Go! Go!’

“But you — will you not go too? What of you?”

“No, no! No matter. There is not time to tell you. Do as I wish. Go quickly.”

“I looked across the sea. I saw the towering water. Its icy breath fanned my face. Its pale crest reached the zenith. Sprayed foam beads fell from it like marbles and dotted the blue ahead. The red sail of our

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boat fluttered in fear. Without pausing to think or to reason, I picked Asra up in my arms and darted with her into the black opening. It was the work of an instant. There was not time for word or argument.

“No sooner had we crossed the dividing line than, with a crash, a great rock suspended above the entrance like a door fell and shut us off from sight of the island and the glittering wave that rolled thundering on. There was no retreat. There was nothing to do but to go on. I had come from the darkness and I was plunged back into it again. Neither light nor sound reached us. Impenetrable night surrounded us. The air however was fresh, as if it had connection with the outside. Beneath my feet a smooth roadway of stone led downward, the declivity being sharp.

“A change had taken place in Asra, which the excitement of the first few moments had prevented me from noticing. Her body had become light as air, and cold and stiff. I

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dreaded to confront the fact and acknowledge to myself what had happened. It was no longer the body of a woman. It was no longer my beloved, no longer Asra, whom I held in my arms. It was the opal which I had first seen between the moon's ivory horns. What a grief was this! What sorrow filled my soul! It was useless to cry out or remonstrate. The change which I had seen upon the night of my arrival had taken place again. I consoled myself by thinking that, with daylight and the earth's surface regained, she would be herself once more. If it had not been for this thought, I could not have gone on. I should not have tried for life. What would there have been to live for! Why could I not reasonably expect this? I had seen it happen before. Almost beneath my eyes the miracle had taken place.

“Lifting the mammoth opal to my shoulder, the easier to carry it, I sped swiftly down the smooth stone way, hoping every moment for a ray of light to give promise of

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an exit, however far away. When I reached the bottom of the declivity and found level stone beneath my feet, there was still no sign of light, and I was so weary that I put my burden down and slept. When I awoke, I ate some of the food in the hamper and went on.

"I must have been deep within the heart of the earth. No sound nor scent of living thing came here. Yet the air was fresh and free from the damp smell of prisoned places. This was the thing that gave me hope. Somewhere, not far away, it had met an outer current and purified itself. The wind blew in my face. It seemed to come from the direction in which I was going. It was not my own motion that caused it. When I paused, I could still feel it blowing gently in my face. That gave me heart, and was the one foundation for hope. Somewhere in the darkness there was an exit through which the fresh air came.

"My other journey beneath the earth was as nothing in point of time in comparison

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with this. Had it not been for the plentiful supply of food within the hamper, I must have perished before I reached the surface. As it was, I suffered greatly. I was exhausted. My feet were blistered with walking on unyielding stone, and my arms were stiff with the strain of holding securely that strange burden. Hope was still high in my heart that I should see the miracle wrought anew and Asra rise from her opal sleep. Otherwise I should have cared for nothing. Life would not have been worth the saving.

“It was night when I came to the surface of the earth, or, at least, darkness had fallen. I found myself upon a tiny island, no larger than a dot upon the water, evidently a coaling station in the South Pacific. There was but one building, a keeper’s cottage, and over it floated the flag of France.

“The evening was not old, for the tide, which indications proved to have been low that day, was creeping in. I did not pause to think or to be thankful for my safety. I

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thought only of Asra. I was in a fever of excitement to find out if my hope was to be realized. Would she awake from her sleep and speak to me? Would our old life go on as before? Carefully I deposited the precious burden upon the ground. The moon was a slender sickle of gold and lent but little light. However, there was a luster that came from the water, and the southern stars were bright. By their aid I hoped to see.

"Asra was wrapped in a thick white tissue. I remembered that it had the same billowy whiteness as the covering that slipped and fell down at her feet like foam on the night of my arrival, when I first saw her standing by the moon's ivory horns. I thrust it aside, tearing it in my haste. Before me lay a radiant opal. From it colors spouted like jets of water in a wonder-park.

"The quick interchange of colors blinded me. I could distinguish nothing, peer as I might. I knelt down and put my face close to the stone in the endeavor to see. Then it

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was as if a rain of light sprayed my face. It was useless. I could make out nothing. Yet the great stone preserved perfectly the contour of her body. Surely I should be able to see her when that play of color called up by the light combinations of the night subsided. As I stood bravely fortifying my soul with hope, defiant in face of discouragement, the glamour of the old island life we had led together touched me vividly, and for an instant's space swung me to the heights of joy. The stone grew pale and white. I knelt beside it. Then, plainly in its depth, I saw Asra asleep, in her gold corselet with its little pink gems and giant rubies.

“‘Asra!’ I called. ‘Awake! We are safe now. Awake and speak to me.’

“Peering closely, I saw her smile, else some ray of restless light touched her.

“In memory I saw once more the silk-hung chamber with its golden phantoms, and I grieved to think that I might never see it again.

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“Asra! The white wave is gone. There is no sign of it anywhere. We are safe. Awake!”

“For answer I heard the sea’s undying pagan laughter. Asra faded away. The stone’s brilliancy revived. The mad dance of spouting colors began. I knew I could not call her back. I flung myself down beside her and buried my face in the sand. In a frenzy of grief I determined to watch until morning. Then, surely, the change I longed for would come. I could not give up hope. Hope meant life. The day would settle it, and as I wished. I lay down beside her and waited for the sun.

“What a night was that! It was the longest I ever knew. At times weariness overpowered me, and I slept to wake with strung nerves. It seemed as if the day would never come. I thought the stars of a dozen nights rose and set. I thought the magic in which I was entangled had hindered the old rotation of day and night. Every change in

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the night sky was reflected in the stone, as if it were the pulse of night. A wisp of clouds across the zenith, and it was malevolently somber; a freshening breeze swept them away, and fire darted from it.

“The day came, gray and chill, with a pallid mist. I was drenched to the skin, and shivering with cold. Fear, born of weariness, assailed me. The earth-grief fell upon me like a cloak. I ached in every limb. In what a fever of hope and fear did I hang over the stone, waiting for the light to clear sufficiently to see. When it did, I could no longer see the face of Asra, only her gemmed costuming and the dim outlines of her body.

“Then the fear that she would fade away forever all but drove me mad. I forgot hunger, weariness, everything, in the endeavor to see again the face I loved. As I watched in such anxiety as they know who have loved deeply, trembling the while, as if from fever, the sun sent its first level rays across the sea. The light penetrated the stone. There

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was nothing to hinder me now. I could delude myself no longer. I could see plainly. Asra was not there.

"Beneath the snowy surface I could distinguish a mingled brightness and the long gold lines where her body had been. While I was looking, these, too, melted away in a dance of color. Doubt and fear had killed her. She had warned me, too. She had told me that the result would be something undreamed of.

"If for an instant hope sprang glowing in my heart, I could see her dimly, but when it passed she melted away in a jeweled mist and left me alone. In one telescopic flash of mind I realized the gloom, the barrenness, of the years that were to come. I realized then, in the flower of my youth, that the best of life lay behind me. From what I had known, the paths of life must lead downward.

"Leaving her concealed in the reeds, I went to the house. I had been correct in my supposition that it was a French coaling-station.

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The keeper was greatly surprised at the presence of a stranger. When I explained how I came, he was more surprised and shook his head doubtfully. He declared that he had never heard of the Opal Isles. He could not explain my presence in any satisfactory way, however, since the only steamer which had been expected for weeks was due that day. When I told him more of the islands, with their twelve white cities, he no longer contradicted me. He said nothing, but he looked at me strangely. He thought that I was mad and feared lest opposition arouse my fury. I knew then that it would be useless to tell of my experience to any one. No one would believe it.

“I saw that the keeper would be relieved to be rid of me. When I asked him for a loan to defray my expenses to Melbourne on the expected steamer, giving only my word in pledge of refunding, he assented readily. He showed a like willingness to oblige me when I asked for a certain wooden chest,

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some six feet in length, which I had seen outdoors beneath one of the windows, and for which I had no ostensible use. He was willing to do anything to have me off his hands.

"The first thing I did when I reached Melbourne was to cable for money to my attorneys in Paris. When the answer came, I proceeded to hire a steamer and to equip it for a cruise of indefinite length. After procuring the most trustworthy seamen that port afforded, I set out on my quest of the Opal Isles. The captain, an old man whose life had been spent upon southern seas, said that in his youth he had heard of wonderful cities of white marble beyond the last known land. Likewise he said that he had heard that no one could land there, because they floated always out of reach. Others affirmed that they were merely icebergs drifting northward from the polar circle.

"I was glad to leave the low, yellow, sun-baked shores of Australia. I longed for the open sea. After we had steamed out of port

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and gone some distance, sand blown by a furious wind from that blistering upland desert which makes its interior, fell upon us and dotted the sea like rain.

“Straight to southward we steamed, past Tasmania. As we neared it, I remembered that it was spring in the southern seas — November. Tasmania was pink with orchard bloom. After we passed it and looked back — so different is its southern coast — there was nothing to be seen but towering columns of black basalt.

“Now the roll of the long waves struck us, sweeping always from west to east. Tremendous waves they are, whose length no one may measure. On and on they sweep, unhindered and unchecked, until somewhere to southward they girdle the earth.

“Five days later we sighted New Zealand — a row of white mountains whose bases are buried in yellow gorse. When we came nearer, we saw the cherry blossoms and the dog-roses of an English garden. Then again

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to southward and out into the long wash of the Australasian waves. Here our steamer disturbed and put to flight a myriad sea-fowl resting idly upon the surface of the water; down-white albatross with wings of jet, and Cape pigeons with checker-board backs. Land was definitely left behind with all that we had known. Before us, like a magic pathway enticing us to follow, stretched the long, shining roadstead of the wind. Swiftly we slipped down it and away toward the Polar seas. At night the Southern Cross flamed bright. At night we saw the vari-tinted stars of a southern zone. We were in a strange world, with a strange sky above us. The sea, too, was strange. Sometimes it was so clear by some little island's side that we could see the mysteries of the deep. Sometimes we saw algae as delicate and finely lined as carven cameos, and sometimes kelp so long it mocked the sea-serpent in its length.

“We coasted past unknown islands, where

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bright sea-growths blazed on coral reefs. We saw palms that looked as if they sprang from the water, so slender was their foothold in the soil. At times all that we knew of an island was a whiff of fragrance that blew across our faces while we slept, or we rose to find a feathery greenness in the day. Or at dawn we coasted near enough to land to catch a phrase drawled in dull semi-tones, or to see the sun gild sharply the bare body of a woman with black and floating hair. Then we came to barren water where no islands were, turquoise blue and chill, upon whose outer edge the ice-fields lay. Then back to northward. Round and round we swung. Thus we scoured the seas. We became known to every merchantman, to every sailor. At first they thought that ours was a like occupation. When they found out the difference, they looked upon us with disfavor. Stories were circulated. They said we brought misfortune and foul weather. Wrecks and sea tragedies were laid at our door. They

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confused us with the Flying Dutchman. Gloom settled down upon us. No one escaped it. Even I was losing heart. I found that we may not live other than our fellows. The punishment for being different is not slight.

“Days and days I sat on deck and scanned the horizon with my glass. When weariness overpowered me, a sailor took my place. Nor at night was the watch relaxed. Then, too, a sailor sat ready to lift his glass at call of a ray of light and sweep the sea. Each night when I went to bed, it was with the hope of finding myself beside the blessed islands when I awoke. That failing, I consoled myself with the possibilities of day. My life trembled between hope and disappointment. These were the poles of my narrowed world.

“There was one room in the steamer especially arranged for Asra. No one entered there except myself. It was lighted with brilliancy, that no material aid might be lacking in reading the great stone’s heart. There, after the nerve-racking day on deck,

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I spent a part of the night, peering into the long gem which lay upon a couch of white.

“It was rarely now, and only under mental stress, that I was able to glimpse the dear face. To do so it was necessary to shut myself off for days from contact with my fellow men and by imaginative effort and strong stimulants key myself to a fictitious joy. Then, for one moment, the fair body in its golden corselet would be visible in all its beauty, and the face smile as if ready to awake from sleep. Nor was this consolation of great duration. It was not long before the strongest and headiest wines failed to have any effect upon me, and I took to drugs. The moments of vision were of slighter duration, the body less distinctly seen, less real, and, it seemed sometimes, less lovely. It was all going from me, all that I had loved. I watched it, but I was powerless to hinder.

“The effect of the drugs failed altogether. There was nothing now that could lift me for an instant to the old height of joy where

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Asra and I had lived and loved. The strain was telling upon my health. Physical weakness helped to make the moments of vision rarer. Never again, Titan-like, could I live with Asra upon the heights. Weariness and weakness and impotence fell upon me. The earth called me, and held me bound. I could only look at the opal with its heart of flame and dream sadly of what had been. I could see Asra now only in the dream recesses of my brain. And I knew, too, that this power would not last. Old age would blot it out. There was nothing that I could hold and call my own.

“The years of cruising had been futile. They had brought disappointment to my hopes and to my heart the certainty that I should never find the delectable isles. My strength was exhausted. I was worn out with the fruitless quest. I gave it up and came here.

“That room there,” indicating with a wave of his hand an upper wing of the house,

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“I built for Asra. It is arranged and furnished like the room in which I found her. There she has lain for fifty years and, as I told you, I do not know whether she is alive or dead. That part of the house, as you may have noticed, fronts the sea, that she may hear always what she loved — the undying laughter of the pagan gods.

“It is years and years now since I have seen her. I am old and I have not the strength. I shall never see her again. But I know that she is there — asleep.”

A year later, in a distant city, I picked up a paper and this head-line caught my eye: “The Strangest Will Ever Filed.” It was an account of how one Gustav Berençy, a nobleman of the south of France, had left his wealth to a gigantic opal, which was shaped like a woman’s form.

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A MOZART FANTASY

*C'est quelque part en des pays du nord — le sais-je?
C'est quelque part sous des pôles aciéreux,
Où les blancs ongles de la neige
Griffent des pans de roc nitreux.*

EMILE VERHAEREN.

“GOOD evening, my Lord of Mozart.”

The voice was sweet and so was the title. He looked up in surprise. Midnight had sounded. He had thought that he was the only one awake in the old house in the Rauhensteingasse with its myriad rooms, of which he rented three. His wife and children were abed. Their clothing littered the room in which he sat and added to its disorder.

He remembered the beautiful face that was bending beside him. At sight of it the years rolled back to the days of his childhood. Now, as she stood in his miserable

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room and called him "My Lord of Mozart," he jumped up in readiness for her behest.

"I have come for you. The carriage waits below."

Something snapped in his head, and it seemed to him that he rushed through gray leagues of space. Then he mastered himself and followed in the direction in which his visitor had gone. He did not find her. She was not within the hall nor upon the street.

There, however, a carriage waited, its driver by the door. He jumped in and fell back among soft cushions. A whip curled in the air, and two horses dashed through the darkness. They left the city, and reached the country. The speed did not lessen. He saw in fleeting perspective black hills and bare trees against a dull silver sky, where pale green stars shone. After they had driven at this pace for a time, they came to a city. He did not care what city it was. He only knew that she lived here. At last he should know who she was. At last!

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The driver dismounted and opened the door. With his whip he pointed to a gate ahead. Then he bowed, leaped to the box and was gone. There was an inscription upon the gate. When he came near, he read in strange and antique characters: "The Land of Music." After he had passed through the gate, he turned to have another look at it. There was nothing to be seen of the gate through which he had entered, nor of the country beyond. In all directions rose the roofs and towers of an alien city.

He found himself in a square where a number of streets converged. He read their names, and one caught his fancy: "The Street of the Masters." He turned into it.

"What wonderful dwellings there are in The Land of Music!" he exclaimed joyously, forgetting for the instant the one he sought. "I knew it! I knew it! Why could I not have come here sooner!" he added, his lips and chin trembling piteously.

"What dwellings the masters dwell in!"

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He looked rapturously down the vista before him. "Here are tone-palaces of an Assyrian magnificence, silverly translucent, of the most gracious symmetry and rising to unthinkable heights. How I love this land, through whose gateways I have just passed! How I love it! It is as if it were made for me. It is a world of crystal and silver and white onyx and pale ivory. I can see streets of dwellings whose harmonious lines make Grecian temples heavy; dwellings of such fabulously fragile beauty as the frost of northern nights paints on the windows. There are arches springing airily from arches, reproduced again and again in delicate, diminishing curves; façades of silver fretwork of the palpitating tenuity of a spider's web; forests of fair columns, their capitals hung with leaves of light."

Then it was that a strange inversion took place. This became the reality, and that sad other world the dream. He covered his face with his hands and gave way

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to a storm of tears, so greatly was he relieved to be rid of the dream where he had known only sorrow. The relief, the unspeakable relief, to know that it was a dream! His frail figure became erect and proud, as he walked along, recognizing the dwellings of his friends. "Here are the houses of Glick and Sebastian Bach and my dear, dear Haydn. But what is that — that structure just ahead? Beethoven? Yes, Beethoven." He looked about. Nowhere could he see anything that out-topped it. "My little friend Beethoven! How kind is life in comparison with the hideousness of dreams!" Again tears dimmed his eyes. "And there dwells Händel! That is just such a temple as the saints would build. It is not altogether original, but it is the work of a mighty soul. If it does not stand for versatility, it stands for strength."

After passing the stern home of Händel, it was some little distance to the next dwelling. When he came where he could see it

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plainly, he laughed long and wildly, just as madmen laugh. "Who ever heard of any one forgetting his own home! How could that black dream have lasted long enough for me to do that? Will it never cease to haunt me? The idea of forgetting my own home!" And he laughed as madly as before.

Ahead, upon a little eminence, not quite in a straight line with the other houses of the street, he saw a sumptuous Italian palace of the best days, built evidently for love and leisure.

It was just such a palace as Lorenzo the Magnificent dreamed of setting among the laureled hills of Tuscany. It was built of resonant crystal, turreted and pinacled, and provided with a myriad Venetian balconies and pillared porticos. It was not of such tremendous height as the dwelling of Beethoven, nor of such vast dimensions as that of Händel, and yet it might easily be called lovelier than either, because of its charm of design.

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As he stormed up the steps impatiently, he noticed how well his blue satin court suit with its jeweled stars and orders and his curling golden hair suited the dwelling in which he lived. The doors swung open to receive him. Powdered footmen bent before him.

The guests were waiting. They were in their places ready for the dance. He bowed before his partner. Her mouth was a little red dot, and her eyes were two deep pools of love. They swung into the dance. The music uplifted them. As changing figures brought them together, he sensed pleasantly the delicacy of her flesh and the floating fragrance of her hair. As he bent in the dance's slow salutes, his eyes embraced soft shoulders, white breasts upheld, flower-like, by stiff corsages, slim, jewel-clasped necks, and twinkling feet beneath lifted lace.

Cavaliers, with heads flung back and hands to sword hilt, like true old French gallants, danced haughtily out to meet gay

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Watteau ladies. Then what smiles, what courtly bows, what languishment, what bird-like gayety! In the swinging whirl he saw court trains outfloat in satin splendor, and the backward tilt of high-coiffured heads. The floors and the mirrored walls reflected the dancers, redoubling their graces in fluent light. He caught the interchange of stolen glances. He saw delicate fingers press responsive hands. He saw the amorous leaning of fond bodies and the pledge of lifted eyes. The air was electric with love. He drank it in eagerly, greedily. It was for this that he had thirsted. Again, for an instant, the black dream swept down upon him and blotted the pageant out. When it passed and he found anew the bright reality, he grasped his companion in his arms convulsively and buried his face in her breast to forget.

“To the banquet hall, good friends! To the banquet hall!” he commanded, when he lifted his face. He leaped to the center of

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the room, silenced the orchestra, and flung up his arms to signal attention, uncontrollable laughter bubbling on his lips—

“ Wine or woman, which is sweetest,
Tell me which for pleasure’s meetest,
Which from care can take us fleetest? ”

he sang, as he danced along.

Silks swished past him. Fans fluttered like butterflies. Little slippers clicked in merry flight. Women drifted past with heightened color and dream-veiled eyes. He heard their low laughter and knew that they were being led with a caress.

As he entered the banquet room, a forest of upstretched arms whose hands held each a wineglass greeted him: “Long life to the Lord of Mozart! The Lord of Mozart!”

Amber and crimson wine-light flecked faces and breasts and lifted arms, and fell in long broken ribbons upon the walls.

“Now find out which one is sweetest!” they chorused.

“I pledge a health to each lady,” he gal-

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lantly responded, bowing before each in turn. "In this way I shall find *her*, for surely she is here." When he had made the rounds and satisfied himself that she was not, he beckoned a young cavalier to him.

"Why is *she* not here?"

"*She*? She never takes part in our revels."

"But she promised to meet me here."

"Impossible, my lord; she is queen."

"And I—am I not king?" he responded haughtily. Then, repenting of the words, he flung his arms tenderly about the boyish figure.

"Ah, my boy, you do not know what love is — its torture, its longing, its insatiable longing. He noticed then how the young cavalier resembled his youthful self before grief and disappointment had lined his face and lighted their wild light in his eyes.

"Go to my generals! Summon the army!"

Doors slid back, transforming the pleasure palace into a hall. The dancers arranged

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themselves on either side. Between them the soldiers passed. And what soldiers! They were small and supple and swift. They flew rather than walked. Each one was a black music note, spurred and bent and vicious. From their legs black needle-like stilettos pointed. They were a destructive, unstemmable torrent. When the last one had crossed the threshold, and they stood drawn up in readiness before it — “After them, my friends!” he ordered. The revelers obeyed. Black horses waited at the door. They leaped upon them and swung through the night.

In the Land of Music it is always night — night lighted by feverishly bright stars and the rising and setting of strange moons.

Upon black and shining backs poised delicate figures; outflying manes revealed the clasp of jeweled arms, and beside the wild heads of the horses shone the faces of musical nymphs. The streets through which they passed were no longer lined with mag-

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nificent buildings. They had entered the oldest part of the Land of Music, which is sparsely settled and where the dwellings are quaint and ancient. Here a primitive people had lived.

“What a ridiculous army!” roared the Lord of Mozart, who led the cavalcade, standing upon his horse and pirouetting. “Look! my good friends! Look!” He pointed ahead.

There they were, gathering about a structure of considerable extent, an army of dwarfs, with big, oblong, melon-like heads. They carried stilettos fringed with darts, but they were slow of motion and aged. They did not seem to have strength enough to carry about their cumbersome heads. And in numbers they did not reach the half of the army of Mozart.

“So that’s our enemy!” he exclaimed, convulsed with laughter, pirouetting again upon his horse’s back. “We’ll make short work of them. Quick, upon them!”

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Like a cloud of black locusts, the vicious army of Mozart fell upon them. They covered them from sight. They smothered them. They dazed them by their numbers and agility. They killed them.

“Now to the house!” he called. “The way is clear.” His eyes shone like steel, and spots of fever dotted his cheeks. He knew that within that ancient dwelling was the lady of his heart.

“Come, my friends!” They rode across the dead bodies of the ancient soldiers, laughing at their ugliness. The ladies pulled high their silken trains lest they be spotted with dust and blood.

“My generals, there within sits the lady of my heart. Bring her out and place her upon the horse beside me.”

The lady they lifted to the saddle in no way resembled the gay court beauties. In her bearing there was something noble.

“Back to the palace!”

Like magic, they covered the distance.

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In front of the entrance, the Lord of Mozart halted and stood erect in his stirrups, bowing majestically to right and left.

“I thank you, good friends, for your aid. And now, good night. I go to celebrate the conquest of love.”

“May joy be with you!” they called in return, waving their hands as their galloping horses disappeared in the brightness of the street.

“Why did you try to conquer me by force?” she asked, facing him in the great chamber into which he had taken her, and speaking for the first time. “Do you not know that it is really by my will that I have come — to save you from humiliation? Do you not know that you can have no power over me?”

“Am I not King! I have power over everything.”

“You do not know who I am.”

“How can that matter, since I love you?”

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"I am the Lady Melodia. I cannot belong to any one. I belong to all. I am queen absolute."

"Did I not know that we are one!" he answered, bowing in mock humility to the stately figure. "Have you not come to me of your own will? Is it not you who guided me here?"

"That is why your deed to-night is shameful."

"But I need you so!" he continued pitifully. "Surely you will not leave me when I need you so. Let me tell you; then you will pity me. I am haunted by a hideous dream. (I never told any one before. I conceal it carefully.) Sometimes I cannot tell which is real — this life here, or the dream. I have the strange consciousness" — he looked about timidly, like a little child, lest some one hear his secret, then drew her close to him, his eyes dark with fear — "that I lead two lives. One is in another world, a world of hard material facts, where

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by the proper grasping of the facts one can have every joy, every comfort. But there I cannot grasp anything. I cannot accustom myself to living. I cannot feel at home. I cannot understand how men buy prosperity. I cannot learn anything. I cannot cope with people. They beat me at every turn. I lack something — that fiber of the commonplace that contends and wins. There, in that black dream-world, I cannot do the simplest things. And because I cannot, I suffer — suffer poverty and hunger. When I buy things honestly with my brain, when I win success, I cannot grasp it. Everything slips away and leaves me alone — to know the want of beggars. Your presence alone dispels that horror and makes me know that this is real, that I am real, and that here I belong."

Like the face of a mother in tenderness was the face of the Lady Melodia, as she murmured: "Dear one! Dear one!"

"Your face lights that black dream-world

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like a star and rests upon my soul. But there it paralyzes the power of action."

"But are you not willing to suffer the dream for the sake of this?" She indicated the glittering chamber.

"If I could always remember that it *is* a dream," he answered piteously. "But they — other people — have had real things, while I have had only the glitter of foam. I'll tell you what it's like," he added boyishly. "You've seen a bottle dropped into water where, instead of standing upright, it wavers about, unable to keep balance? That is what I am without you. Does not that justify what I did to-night? Does not that make it right?"

Pity had taken the place of resentment when she answered: "Yes, perhaps. But you see you cannot keep me. A Titan could not do that."

"But I am more than a Titan."

"Once I was wholly yours — "

"When?"

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THE HOUSE OF GAUZE  
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“In your youth. Then I was yours unasked. Before you had grown old, before life had marred you.”

He looked at himself in a mirror. It was true that there was no sign of youth in the face, nor, strange as it may seem, was there any sign of age. It was the face of one whom some terrible passion had consumed and burnt out without materially ageing.

“Why did you leave me?”

“Because you were false to me.”

“How could I be false to you when I have had no pleasures apart from you?”

“Did I not tell you that you could not live two lives — the life of a man and the life of a god?”

“You mean love? That is the only thing that makes the black dream tolerable. It is like the honey the stinging bee carries. It is the gem in the head of the toad.”

“That is why I said you were false to me,” she replied, anger brightening her eyes.

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“But now I love only you. Surely you know that.”

“How can that right the matter? I cannot belong to any one in whose heart I have been supplanted for an instant.”

“You will reconsider when you know that I am worthy. Besides, there is no one else who *is* worthy. Perhaps you have not read my heart. I tired of that other — of love — long ago, as I have tired of every real thing. It became like a too sweet honey. It sickened me, it smothered me; it made me struggle to be free. It made me long to feel flying in my face the bright insubstantiality of dreams. And you are my brightest dream,” he said, lifting the long hair and burying his face in it.

“I know, I know, but — ”

“Wait! Do not decide now. You do not know me. There are powers you have not suspected. I will make you forget. I will take you where oblivion is deepest. I will prove that I am worthy. You shall

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never leave me. What care I for law — for right! I will take you where there is no law, no right, except my will. I will isolate you with myself so far beyond the boundaries of the real that thought cannot return. We will go beyond the farthest edge of dreams. Come to the window where you can see the exterior of the palace. Now watch."

She saw the crystal walls glow as if a flame dwelled within them, while from tower to basement fell a silver veil bordered with diamond sound-crystals, which floated gracefully. Then the veil rose and vanished; the flame dimmed and faded until the palace became as frail as if made of ashes. From this ashen palace rose a diaphanous, white gauze, pearl-encrusted palace, mirroring itself in a lake of ice. The man beside her, too, had changed. He became well-nigh transparent. He looked like a spirit made visible. His hand was frailer and whiter than the gauze upon which it rested. His eyes were terrible in their concentrated power.

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“Now, see where I have taken you! Now do you think that there is any return? See that avenue of white ferns there, from which the frost particles fall like rain. Can you leave me now? Do you want to? Look at that frozen sea to the north, encrusted with opaque crystals. Note its greenish pallor. You are wondering what is flying across it, are you not? I can see it in your eyes. You are saying to yourself: ‘What are those creatures which have no form and yet have every form?’ Watch them awhile — watch them! My love, those changeful and indeterminate contours are the unembodied stuff melodic dreams are made of. They are the world of my soul made visible — the soul of a creator. Now do you guess where you are? If you do, you know that there is no return. They who come here cannot go back.

“Watch the far horizon for a moment! There — that light. There, every once in a while, bright caravans swing to sight, re-

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main visible for a time, like ships upon the desert, flooding the sea with a regretful splendor, then disappear. But you can never reach them, my love, never signal them and go away from me. Do you hear that sound? But you do not know what it is, Sweet, else you would not listen so calmly.

"High above that frozen sea (in whose heart sleep a million terrors — that frozen sea, which is genius), so high that your eye cannot see it, a brilliant-winged bird hovers and flings down the fragment of a song. The bird is love. When its song reaches the surface of that frozen sea, it is shivered and broken like a crystal, and the fragments roll on and on until they reach my gauze-built palace and make it tremble pitifully. Am I not the first of kings, the wonder king! Who can resist me! Not you!" he answered, kissing her impetuously.

"Do you never tire of mad improbabilities?"

"Tire of them! Does God tire of his

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Heaven? The madder they are, the more they please me. I, too, am a god. I have made a heaven of my own. I can love only a self-created world where nothing bears the mark of materiality, of other people's commonplaceness. In my world matter takes the form of my slightest wish. I am the center about which change revolves. I am the force which projects form." He clapped his hands. "Let the palace be lighted!"

Across the floor crept the wan shimmer of the will-o'-the-wisp, and down the walls the green phosphoric glow of fireflies. Then, at a motion of his hand, the gauze palace faded to a cold ethereal splendor until it seemed to the Lady Melodia, in her fear and wonder, that it was little more than a vague radiance against the snow-lit water. Above, three moons poised, swinging melodiously into place, streaking it with opalescent light.

"Will you deign to accept my arm?" he asked mockingly. As he bent before her, she saw that he had become as ethereal as his

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house of gauze. His face had an unearthly beauty, and his eyes were awful in their concentrated splendor.

They left the chamber and entered a hall, in whose center a staircase descended for two stories. Upon this staircase came and went an endless procession of pale and regal women, dull gems upon their breasts and brows.

With a gesture of offended dignity, the Lady Melodia turned as if to leave the hall.

“There is no cause for anger,” he exclaimed. “I love them, of course. Are they not made for love? But in loving them, I have dreamed only of you.”

“Your love, evidently, has not made them happy,” she retorted scornfully. “Why are their eyes so full of grief and regret? And why are they silent? Do they never speak?”

“They are not real, any more than I am. They are imprisoned in the crystal prison of a melody. They are the women who rise

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from the whirlpools of music. Like the Rusalka, they flutter over the abyss. I created them to live on the boundary line of sound and silence."

"That is cruel. Give them life. I command you!"

"In every artist, my love, there is the soul of a Nero who longs for the burning of Rome. They who love beauty are always cruel."

"But this is monstrous. I will not permit it."

"I am no crueler to them than life has been to me. Like them, I have always lived on the boundary line of two worlds. In neither have I been at home. I, too, am not real. Why do you not pity me? Am I not dearer to you than they?"

"What are they begging for so piteously? See their outstretched hands!"

"For life, to break the melody in which they are encased and give them life."

"And you can refuse?"

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“Is not that just what life has refused me? Besides, I love them best as they are. Can you not see what they are to me? They are my soul’s life. They are the myriad lives that my brain lives. Look! As they strain earthward with bitter yearning, thirsting for life, for the substantiality of joy, of love, can you not understand how they inspire me, how they make me what I am? Their futile frenzy touches my brain to fire. It pours a fury into my soul and strings my nerves to mastery and to creative power.

“Ah, you do not know — no one will ever know — what they have been to me, what stories, what caprices they have breathed into me. Their mute eloquence has told me tales of wild longing, of unspeakable desires, of unknown loves — I cannot tell you how I love them. They set a-tingle in my brain the centers of creative fancy. They swing me into the harmonies of the silences. They project upon the canvas of my soul melodic visions. I live with the unexpanded vigor

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of their prisoned lives. Their desires are realized in me.

“Ah!” he continued, becoming reminiscent and talking as if to himself, “I have had strange, strange loves indeed, which not even tone-magic can picture, beyond the limits of time and space. I have always been the king of *bons viveurs*. I have been a pagan exquisite, a Lucullian epicure! How I have despised those who had only money to enjoy with! What miserable beggars are they! What has gold to do with the brain? It is the brain that enjoys.

“But to-night is the crowning night. To-night I have you. To-night I have for a love her whom no mortal has dared to love before. In your eyes I shall not read the memory of other lovers. Their ghosts cannot come between us. Upon your lips I shall not taste the savor of their kisses. Your sweetness has been reserved for me. What matters it that I have made a bonfire of my soul to buy you! If I had ten lives, I would

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do the same. This way! This way! There is another room. This room was made for you. No other woman has entered it. It is a strange room. It is lighted only by the stars, those discreet stars which have shone upon the amorous sleep of lovers."

No sooner had they crossed the threshold, however, than the Lord of Mozart began to tremble violently. Beads of sweat dotted his brow. He put out his hands gropingly, as do they who cannot see.

"The dream! Again the dream! Oh, keep it from me! Banish it with your kisses! Banish it with your mouth and the clasp of your arms. How is it possible that I suffer from a horror like this in the splendid palace of my genius? I cannot see you, but I know that you are here. I see only the dream. In the dream I am dying, dying miserably, in a shabby rooming-house in old Vienna. Through a little window I can see that it is misty and gray outside, and that a cold rain drizzles down. In the room where I lie

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are poverty and the weeping of little children.

“Oh, fling it from me with your love! Let me bury my face in your breast and forget. Keep it away from me! Keep it away from me! Why can I not reason! Why can I not know that the world would not permit one gifted as I am to die in want — one who bears within his blood the genius of his race!

“Yet I do die there. I know it. I see it. Unaccompanied by a single one who mourns, my shabby coffin is borne along in the rain — to the potter’s field where the beggars lie, and the red earth covers my mouth.”

The Lady Melodia bent her head and wept. She knew that the dream was true, and that the king of the world had died.

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IN a low doorway, beneath a sign which advertised his saloon in three languages, Hebrew, German, and wretched phonetic Mauschel, stood the Polish keeper, bawling out for the benefit of his countrymen the arrival of fresh vodka from the Vistula.

Since the "*hep hep*" riots and the *Judenkrawall*, the Hamburg Ghetto gates had been closed and the quarter shut off from supplies. This morning they were open again, and noise and excitement followed.

The news kindled the inhabitants' volatility. Men and women rushed into the street to discuss it. Their minds were divided between love of money and need of supplies and the world-old fear of bodily injury. They recalled the horrors of the weeks preceding the ban, and shivered to think that there was no way of escape. They

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must expose themselves to fresh injuries or starve.

In one of the most wretched rooms of the quarter this subject had been under discussion since sunrise. Here lived Gaon Zunz, his aged wife, Deborah, and his fifteen-year old granddaughter, Rahel.

Since the exile, Gaon had increased his hours of prayer and fasting, and he felt convinced that restoration to liberty had been brought about by his prayerful intercession. Therefore he decided that in the future Rahel must go to the city and beg, that he might devote himself to prayer and study.

Gaon Zunz was born in southern Russia, where he became a follower of the Chassidim. In his early manhood he journeyed westward to preach to the less devout Jews of central Europe that fond fanaticism of the East. In Hamburg he married and settled, with the hope of raising sons to the glory of Israel. Disappointed in

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this and feeling it to be God's justice for weakness lurking in the flesh, he gave himself over to prayer and fasting, to month-long meditation upon the mystic Cabbala, and to interpreting the Torah and the Talmud after the manner of the chosen. Thus he earned the prouder name of Father of the Faith.

Late in life, a daughter was born to Deborah and Gaon, but there was no rejoicing in the house of Zunz. Then, indeed, Gaon felt that the hand of God was heavy upon him. And when, at the age of seventeen, Rahel, his daughter, after persistently refusing to enter into his arrangements for marriage, ran away with a French artist who had become enamored of her rare Oriental beauty, and had painted her as "*La Belle Juive*," he felt that there was no sinner so great as he, for was he not responsible for his household?

Misery and sorrow fell upon him. The roots of his faith were shaken. Surely there

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must be sin in his heart, else he could not so grievously err.

The intervening years had served somewhat to lighten this burden of grief, along with the self-justifying thought that when the ban had been pronounced against his daughter he had been the first to join in the curse. Likewise he remembered, and with a thrill of pleasure, that the next day he had celebrated, in tolerable serenity of soul, the ceremony in honor of the dead.

Two years later the artist husband died, and one winter morning, Rahel, with a ten-days'-old child, came back to the old East Ghetto gate to beg admittance. Kind-hearted Joel, the keeper, took her petition to the chief rabbi and interceded for her.

All day she waited in the cold by the gate, while the rabbis, after having summoned her father, deliberated. Gaon said nothing in her favor. He had buried her, and she no longer existed. He would abide by the

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will of the majority. Toward sunset it was agreed that she should be taken back.

The chill of the day of waiting in the snow by the windy gate was more than her weakened condition could bear, and she died shortly, leaving baby Rahel to the stern up-bringing of her aged grandparents.

At the thought that his daughter had died in the faith of her fathers, a great peace settled down upon Gaon, and with it the blessed realization that she could sin no more. "The Lord killeth and maketh alive: He bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up," he repeated with fervor. He had at last received substantial proof of the answering of prayer. He had received his reward as a faithful "Son of the Commandment," who places reverence for the Law before love of family.

In return for this favor of the Most High, he determined so to bring up the little Rahel that there might be no repetition of her mother's waywardness.

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A sad childhood was hers. The playtimes with little neighbors were embittered by scornful treatment and the nicknames "Gentile" and "Christian dog." They had been told that she was not of the ancient blood. She learned to feel that she was an outcast. When she told these things to her grandfather, he explained, as best he could, that her father had belonged to the wicked world outside the gate, and that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children.

She meditated long and deeply upon this, but she could not understand. As a result there remained with her an unspeakable fear of that stern Hebrew God to whom her grandfather prayed, and whose dwelling was the round-topped prayer house. After feast days she lay awake far into the night, tormented by visions of ghostly, white-clad figures with up-stretched arms weaving to and fro for hours in the ecstasy of prayer, or intoning the ancient desert songs of Judea. She had watched them

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ever since she could remember from her seat beside her grandmother in the long gallery behind the grating.

Despite the regular attendance at the synagogue, Gaon was unable to impress upon the child the sacredness of the ancient ceremonial. Fruitless were his exhortations. She was neither willful nor perverse. They made no impression upon her. They failed to penetrate the depths of her being. She could not be brought to realize the wickedness of eating butter after meat, nor of eating it from the same plate; nor of touching the implements for making fire between Friday night and Saturday night. Indeed, her very first whipping was for drinking the cup of wine poured for Elijah.

Gaon looked upon these pranks as the outcome of childish dullness. In addition, he was preparing himself by prayer for the favor of the ecstatic vision. So bent was he upon self-examination that he did not perceive that in the child-soul was being

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fought the ancient battle of the Latin and the Hebrew, the worshippers of the flesh and the worshippers of the spirit, the realists and the dreamers, which, in ages past, had made the self-denying followers of the Hebrew Moses repellent and unlovely to Judea's pleasure-loving, pagan governors.

By the time little Rahel reached her eighth year, she had learned not to play with other children. Cruelty had made her timid. She preferred to stay within rather than subject herself to taunts. In the dingy little front room, hung about with old clothes, and tawdry, half-worn ornaments, she would sit for hours and watch the children through the top half of the dirty window, which reached the street level. At first this isolation was grief unspeakable, and rebellion filled her soul. She watched them through blinding tears, while longing for love and companionship gripped her heart.

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Time eased this feeling and taught her to amuse herself. She found she could make any number of playmates with a pencil. Soon the days were not long enough to fix upon paper the swarming children of her fancy. She reproduced everything she saw; the passers in the street, the women who bought old clothes of her grandmother, and the furniture in the room.

When her eyes and back ached from long bending, she would look up through the broken pane of the dirty window at a scrap of blue sky ever and ever so far away, and the color gave her pleasure. It reminded her of one of her grandfather's stories of the Holy Land of the Jews, where there was a sea called Galilee, which was as blue as the turquoise in the Polish saloon-keeper's wife's *Shabbes* brooch.

One day, after many weeks of practice, when her childish fingers had acquired considerable skill, she found a fresh sheet of brown paper which she pinned smoothly

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upon a board, with the intention of making a picture of *Grossmutter Jackobsky*, the pickle dealer across the way.

All day the little, fat old woman stood and waved and beckoned with her dirty, brass-ringed fingers and called: “*Pick-les!! Pick-les!!*” About her neck was a rope, from which was suspended a flat board, piled breast-high with green, shining pickles.

She wore a curly, faded wig which was always askew, and many-branched coral earrings which reached her shoulders, the rings being tied about her ears with coarse yarn, which made two wriggling black bows on either side.

She was touching the figure up for the last time one night several days later, when Gaon came in unexpectedly and caught her at the work.

“What’s this?” he thundered, snatching the picture from her hands. “God of Israel! that one of my own blood should keep me from the vision! Have I not told you that

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we may not make pictures, that it is expressly forbidden by the Torah? Have I not told you that it is a violation of the Law? "*Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God . . .*"

The last words ended in a shriek of rage. His face was streaked with lines of ashen white. Purple veins knotted up ominously upon his forehead. Madness trembled in his voice. She could see its unsteady light in his eyes.

Scarce knowing what he did, in his fear and horror of the crime that had been committed beneath his roof, he fell upon the frightened child. When his anger had expended itself, Rahel's right hip was dislocated and her back injured. After many weeks, when she was able to be up and about again, she was a hopeless cripple, and a distortion of the body had set in.

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At sight of the result of his anger, Gaon quoted Samuel: "Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked," and sought to prepare himself anew for the vision.

During the years that followed, no answer had been granted him until the opening of the gate on the day for which he had petitioned. He ascribed the barrenness of the intervening years to Rahel's transgression of the Torah law. Now he felt that God had forgiven him and restored him to favor. If he could win thus much by personal intercession, was it not reasonable to believe that he could win more and perhaps avert the future persecution of his people?

For this reason he had made up his mind that Rahel must go into the city and look after the living. She was old enough. She was fifteen, although she was hardly larger than a child of twelve. During the seven years since the injury she had steadily grown out of shape, until she was a one-sided hunchback with a huge, misshapen

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hip. Her face, too, had taken on the pinched, pitiful look of cripples.

Gaon's decision that she must go to the city was like sentence of death. She had never been outside the gate. She was afraid of the great world which stoned grown people as the children used to stone her. And to go all alone! Her soul sickened.

"Yes, you must go on the morrow, Rahel, if the others are not molested to-day. I am too old. Besides, I have a greater duty here. There will be no danger for you, because you do not look like our people. You are a cripple, and they will give to you richly."

It was a pitiable figure, clad in the sober, earth-colored livery of the poor, that limped down the long street from the Ghetto gate the next morning. She looked like a little, shivering partridge with a broken wing. Slung over her back and trailing along behind in the dirt, was a coarse bag for old clothes. Hidden carefully in the bottom of that bag, however, were brown paper

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and two pencils, in case she had a minute in which to rest.

The spring air was warm and sweet. Iridescent flecks of morning mist hovered over distances and disengaged themselves from grass and trees. What a wonderful world outside the gate! The houses were clean and white. The windows sparkled. In front of each house was a little green grass plot with flowers in it. She had never seen flowers growing before. There was no room in the Ghetto, which was a fixed space for an increasing number. To be sure, there were flowers in the Synagogue for the Feast of Weeks, and the *succah* were frequently roofed with green leaves and trailing vines for Tabernacles. But here were flowers of all colors — growing right out of the ground.

She forgot her fears. Her cramped lungs expanded in the purer air. Her cramped soul expanded, too, with joy at realization of the beauty of the world.

There is a Fatherland of the spirit which
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has nothing to do with country, race, or language, where the heart is happy, and over which beams warmly the smiling sun of genius. She had found it in the heart of an alien city; but the artist's gift was hers, and that makes beggars kings.

In each yard grew some flower that she had not seen in the one before, and she wandered on and on, forgetful of time, weariness, the errand upon which she had come. Color affected her sensitive nerves pleasurable, exquisitely, as does melody the sensitive ears of a musician.

There were trees, too. In the Ghetto only thin, starved poplars grew. Here were all kinds, and the tender young leaves upon them shone like an aura of green, sweet light.

She walked on and on, until she dropped from weariness, and the chilling thought came that Gaon would be very angry if she went back empty-handed.

While she rested, she ate the bread she

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had brought, and began to look at the people. They were not like Ghetto people. For the most part they were well dressed. Some of the women had bright yellow hair, and, best of all, they looked down upon her kindly. As she sat staring up at them, with great, dark eyes in whose depths lay grief and an infinite longing, first one, then another, dropped a coin in her lap.

Down at the end of a distant street, ever and ever so far away, something sparkled, something blue as the sky, but of a changing blue, vibrantly bright, like light. It was the color of the turquoise in the rich Polish woman's *Shabbes* brooch. It must be the Sea of Galilee! Why had not her grandfather told her! It was probably a very large sea, she reflected, and the other side reached Palestine.

The desire came to reproduce the sea with the dancing splendor upon it, and indeed everything she saw; the flowers, the trees with their halos of young light.

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There followed speedily the discouraging thought that a pencil could not do it. For Ghetto scenes, where everything was gray or black or brown, a pencil was well enough, but for this something different was needed.

She jumped up, forgetful of weariness and her aching back, determined to beg enough clothes to fill the bag, so that she could keep the coins for herself. When she reached the Ghetto, she would talk it over with Joel. He would know if there were pencils of a different kind, which made color. If there were, she would give him the money and let him buy them.

The next morning she took advantage of Gaon's good humor and left the Ghetto late, that she might see Joel alone and find out if he had made the purchases. Sure enough, he was waiting for her, his wizened face puckered into a smile. Carefully beckoning her to one side, he handed her a tin box. Lifting the lid, he showed her rows and rows of bright paint tubes, brushes,

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pieces of canvas, and some sheets of drawing paper.

"Did n't it cost an awful lot, Joel, more than I gave you?"

"Just three times as much; but you'll earn the money in a week to pay it back — see if you don't! One of the artist fellows in the shop showed me how to use them. You stick your thumb through this thing — *so!* Then squeeze out the paint and mix it the color of what you want to make. That same artist fellow told me there was going to be a picture show in his shop window to-day. You be sure to see it. The pictures will be made out of just such stuff as you have here. Now don't you miss seeing that picture show — on no account — Rachel!" he called out, as she hobbled away.

Her heart grew light as the distance increased between herself and the Ghetto. The bright world filled her with a pleasant sense of possession. Could she not make all the lovely things she saw her own? Could

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she not steal them and put them on the white paper in the bottom of the old bag?

"I'll fill the bag first and get what money I can, and then I'll go to the picture show."

Few could withstand the appealing, misshapen figure, with the ragged dress and piteous face. As noon approached, there was enough in the bag to satisfy Gaon, and she turned her steps toward the shop, in the direction Joel had given.

It was not hard to find. Some distance away she caught the gold gleam of a frame, and saw a crowd upon the walk. When she reached the edge of the crowd, she was obliged to put her burden down and pause for breath. Noon was at hand and the people were beginning to leave. Soon she dared to creep forward and look up.

Oh, never-to-be-forgotten moment! Wondrous vision! The gold frame filled the window from side to side. Within it, floating downward across a well-nigh endless vista of clouds and radiant mists, tenderly

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up-curling and fleecily white, yet which seemed to be just on the point of bursting into the brilliancy of sunlight, or into some more delicate, multi-colored efflorescence of light, was a figure—a figure of a man of divinest beauty. His blue robe edged with gold floated gently on the roseate air. About his head was a circle of light, as if there an immortal sun was about to rise, and his hands were outstretched in the blessing of prayer.

"It is strange," thought Rahel, "that his hands are held right out toward me." She looked about for verification. "Yes, they are held right out toward me and not toward any of the others. And his eyes, too, are looking down into mine."

As she stood and looked up at the sweet, sad eyes, and they looked back tenderly into hers, a feeling of grief cramped her heart,—grief for the mother-love she had never known, for the careless merriment of childhood lost and gone, for the stonings,

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the taunts, the jeers, the insults; for the cruel beatings, the enforced fasts, the insufficient food; the cold, damp room where she slept on a pile of rags and wept herself to sleep, and where, in her timid childhood, she had suffered agonies of fear of the dark and the storms and the wind. She felt that the pictured One above was sorry; that He pitied her and suffered too; that He knew it all, understood it all; and tears came to her eyes and fell down, one by one, like crystals, on the walk. She felt as the child feels who runs to its mother's skirts, sure of protection and comfort.

The beam of love melted the hardened anguish of her heart and gave it voice, as sun melts silent snow-fields and makes way for the "green murmur" of summer. She stood and wept, and her heart was lightened. Her grief melted away and vanished in the mist of tears. Passers-by jostled her, but she did not feel them. The noon hour passed nor did hunger remind her of it, nor

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weariness warn that she had stood for a long time. The ineffable face which has smiled its peace adown the bitterness of the ages smiled into hers, and the miracle of love was wrought anew.

She could not drag herself away from the picture; she could not look enough. She drank in its meaning, its caressing sympathy, its all-pervading kindliness, greedily. It was for this that she had thirsted, as a traveler in a stony desert thirsts for water; for what is love but the thirst of the soul?

“I can make me a picture just like that!” she thought, with a thrill of pleasure.

Inspired by this resolve, she went around to a side street, took out the drawing-paper and pencils and, seating herself upon the old bag, went to work.

“I will make it just like that, only beneath I will paint the Sea of Galilee.”

When the picture was sketched in, she left the clothes-bag with a Jewish fruit-seller, and went back to compare her work

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with the original; changing and correcting until the pencil sketch was a perfect likeness in miniature.

On the way home, she meditated upon ways and means of executing the plan. How could she get a piece of canvas large enough, and when she got it, where could she put it? Gaon must not know, nor any one in the quarter.

As she neared the Ghetto and saw in the distance the complicated twisted gables of the old house, like a flash the problem solved itself. The two rooms occupied by Gaon and Deborah were on the first floor. Out of the rear of these rooms a rickety stairway, clinging to one wall, led to an upper, back room, which Rahel occupied. This room, whose two outer walls were of stone, belonged to an older house, which a wealthy rabbi had built for his own use several decades before. The front had fallen down and been replaced by the present wretched wooden structure.

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The old rabbi's room had been painted pale yellow, with the exception of one long, white panel reaching nearly to the ceiling, which was left unpainted — as was the custom with the pious — for a testimonial of the good rabbi's grief at the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem.

"I will paint it in that panel. Grandmother is too feeble and too nearly blind to risk the stairs, and Gaon is too busy. He has not entered the room for years. It will be safe enough there. To-morrow is *Shabbes*, and the next day the Christian Sunday; I shall have two days in which to begin it."

When Monday came and she went into the city again, it was with the happy consciousness that the great picture was begun. She went straight to the shop window in order to contemplate the original and take from it corrective ideas for her copy.

The picture was gone, but in its place there was another of the same man, almost,

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if not quite, as lovely. This time he was sitting in a field of lilies beside a sunny sea. She felt dimly, rather than thought, that his face was as pure and as beautiful as the flowers and did not cause the slightest discord in the scene's serenity. In front of him children played. He was holding his arms out toward them invitingly, as if to embrace them all, and the world beside, as if he would say, "So wide is my love." The same gentle, tender smile curved the lips, and the eyes were twin stars of love.

Beneath were some printed words she could not read. As she stood lost in contemplation, a woman came and stood beside her in whose face she recognized the old indelible marks of the Jewish race.

The woman was a baptized Jewess, whose early days had been passed in the Ghetto, and who retained a memory of its Mauschel dialect.

"Who is it?" ventured Rahel timidly, pointing to the picture.

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THE KING  
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Finding the name unintelligible to the strange child, the woman was searching in her mind for a circumlocution when —

“Is it a great king?” whispered Rahel, in an awed voice.

“Yes, the greatest King in the world.”

“Where does he live?”

“Everywhere.”

“Then he is here in Hamburg?”

“Yes, dear.”

“Now?”

“Yes, right here.”

“What is he doing there in the picture?”

“Blessing little children. He loves them. If they are blind, He touches their eyes and they see. If they are ill, He makes them well.”

“Does he love me?”

“Yes, dear.”

Again tears came to her eyes and fell upon the pavement.

“Do you think he would make me well — and — *straight?*”

THE KING

“If you love Him, I know He will.”

When Rahel brushed the tears away from her eyes, so that she could look up, the kind woman was gone. She could not see her in any direction and she had forgotten to ask where he lived.

That day she thought of nothing but the King. Gaon and his displeasure if she returned with an empty bag vanished like mist before the sun. *The King! The King!* Her soul was caught up and whirled along in an ecstasy of emotion that banished thought and fear.

The divine face which in ages past smiled down upon its martyrs' insensibility to pain and anguish, upon its exiles for faith's sake, forgetfulness of home and kindred, and upon the mortally injured, the blessed promise of a paradise beyond, wrought its old magic upon her. Nor weariness, nor hunger, nor fear could reach her through Love's fever, sent of God.

“Such a very great king,” she reflected,

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“must live in one of those large houses at the edge of the city.”

Patiently she limped along the dusty roads, the old bag trailing behind, pausing at each house that presented a goodly appearance to inquire, in a language that no one could understand, if the King lived there. When they shook their heads, she was loth to go away, and tried again and again to explain. To make up for inability to answer her questions, and for the grief and disappointment that lay in her eyes, they gave her money. She took it mechanically, not knowing what she did.

For a week she was not seen in the Ghetto. The day's long journeys to the outskirts of the city made it impossible to reach the gate at four, which was closing time. She slept in barns and by haystacks, and kind-hearted servants fed her

No large house in the environs was left unvisited. As daily the quest became more futile, she stopped passers on the streets,



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and with trembling gestures and tearful words tried to explain what she wanted to know, pointing the while to her poor bent back and misshapen hip. She peered into the carriages of the rich and scanned each passing face.

Her feet were bruised and bleeding; her throat parched with the dust of the road; her eyes dim and blurred with the strain of looking. But of this she knew nothing, nor that the absorbing passion was wasting her body and burning up the frail tenement of the spirit.

People became accustomed to seeing the strange child with the wild, white face, and touched their foreheads significantly when they met her.

A week later, when she turned her steps toward the Ghetto, the only thought that came to console her for the bitterness of disappointment was that she must surely find him sometime, because he lived in Hamburg. And then, too, he might be away

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on a visit and that kind woman not know about it.

The silver coins served in some slight degree to mollify Gaon's wrath, until she persistently refused to explain the cause of her absence. Then he would have beaten her as of old, had it not been for the nearness of the Passover, and the fact that he wished to preserve his serenity of soul, with the hope that at that season the vision might be vouchsafed him. He made peace with his conscience by commanding her to stay at home and fast and pray, preceding the feast.

During these days of punishment, when she was confined within her room, she utilized every moment of the light, from the first faint flush of dawn to the last pallid beam of evening, in working upon the picture. Like magic it grew beneath her fingers. Each stroke of the brush brought nearer to her the living figure. She thrilled with the artist's incommunicable joy of creation. All her life, all her love, all her energy, all her

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longing, she put into the blessed face. She poured her soul into it. She robbed her frail body of life that it might beam the richer.

As the painted face took on life and beauty and color, and the pulsating glow of reality, the frail, gnome-like figure that worked upon it, standing upon an old chair placed on top of a table, became frailer and more spectral looking, and painted with a fiercer and a more demoniac energy. The brush flew with the fury of inspiration. Each drop of paint wrought a miracle and called matter into life. The artist's body was wasted away until it looked as if a spirit caught up in a cobweb of rags was hovering against the old rabbi's wall, and painting with the marvelous precision of a supernatural power. At the end of the two weeks the picture was completed and shone like a gem illuminating the dingy room.

When Gaon's good humor returned sufficiently to send Rahel out of the Ghetto

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again, Passion-week had come and its tragic gloom hung over the German city. As she walked along slowly and feebly, feeling the effect of the fast, she caught sight, down the old familiar street, of the Sea of Galilee, and her heart leaped high with joy at the thought that beneath the feet of the King she had made it just so blue and sparkling.

She was too weak to beg. She was too weary to walk. She sat down and watched the blue water in that happy daze which exhaustion brings to the mind. She felt as if she were encased in a crystal sphere, against which beat vainly the tingling noises of life, but whose bright surface reflected, soap-bubble-wise, color and form with an added charm. The world floated off and away, and she watched it vaguely, her mind taking note of it as of something seen in a dream. She did not know how long she sat there. Hours were as minutes. The light began to slope to westward, warning her of closing time. She got up feebly, determined to go

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as far as the window to see the picture. On the morrow the Passover began, and she would not be permitted to leave the Ghetto for eight days. Feebly, dizzily, she dragged herself along, her mind a chaos of fragmentary thoughts.

She could see the window some distance away, but nothing gleamed in it. On approaching, what a vision of grief met her eyes! The shock brought order to her mind and summoned her strength by one mighty effort to a consuming realization of grief.

There, in the deep window recess, which was draped in black, just where the glowing picture had hung, was a huge cross of snowy marble, and upon it, dying, suffering, with pitiful wounds upon the hands and feet and breast, with a crown of cruel thorns upon the gentle brow — Oh! agony beyond expression — *The King!!*

Now she could never find him, never see him! Now he could not lay his hands in blessing upon her and make her well! There

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was no one who pitied her, no one who loved her! There was nothing left to live for.

When the dimness which overmastering emotion causes passed, she looked about at the people to see if their grief was equal to her own. They were going about busily and happily as usual. Bright-haired girls tripped by in groups, carrying bouquets of gay flowers, and calm matrons led little children. Yes, yes, it was all true what Gaon had told her: *the world outside the gate was wicked!*

Why did they not mourn for him? Why did they not cover their heads with the white grave cloths and strew upon them ashes? Why did they not find the ones who killed him and torture them — torture them — torture them!

Her grief was transformed into rage. Physical exhaustion strung her nerves to the pitch of frenzy and sent the wild blood beating in her brain.

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She threw away the old bag. She pushed back hastily the thick hair from her eyes. She straightened as best she could the miserable bent figure. She turned and faced the passers-by and the busy street. She flung her long, thin arms upward, as do Judean shepherds when they pray, and in that stern and ancient tongue which is rich in reproaches and the eloquence of vengeance, she cursed them. She cursed them in her rage and fury at their heartlessness, their wanton cruelty, their base ingratitude.

Shriller and shriller grew her voice, fiercer and more unrestrained the unintelligible words, which called down upon them the vengeance of the stern Hebrew God, who would destroy them with the fire of his wrath. Her frail body, swaying to and fro in the agony of emotion, was all but consumed by the whirlwind of passion that swept it. The heat of anger burned and withered it as does flame the stubble, and she fell forward exhausted, upon the walk.

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THE KING  
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Some one picked her up and placed her in a neighboring doorway. But what terrible grief breathed from her face! Her eyes, out of which the passion had died, were like dim, tarnished mirrors, and the pitiful mouth was pinched and pale. There was nothing left to live for! The sun had gone out and the moon was dead and the stars had fallen out of heaven.

When she reached home, she flung herself upon the floor and wept. To her grandmother's questions and exhortations she was deaf. She did not hear them. Nothing mattered now.

Gaon came, his eyes shining with fanaticism, and told her that it was the eve of the Fourteenth of Nisan, that on the morrow the Passover began, and that she must help her grandmother prepare the evening meal. To his commands she turned unheeding ears. Her lifted face expressed the apathy of the dead. Her blurred eyes looked through him and beyond at something he could not see.

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When the meal was ready, the cups of salted water set on, the bitter herbs, and the leg of mutton, Gaon arose and said reverently: "Blessed art Thou — who hast sanctified us by Thy commandments, and hast commanded us concerning the removal of the leavened bread."

He took one of the lighted candles and proceeded to search carefully the house, according to the command, to make sure that nothing forbidden be left during the season of the feast. Into every nook and cranny of the two rooms he peered, saying after each examination that if anything forbidden be left unnoticed, it was not his fault and his heart was pure.

When Rahel heard him groping on the rickety stairs in the back room, she leaped to her feet and followed.

"Grandfather — do not go there! You know there can be nothing in my room. Do not go there!"

"I must do as the Law commands."

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THE KING  
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“No — Grandfather! — it is useless — the stairs are unsafe — do not go!”

Unheeding her words, he climbed the creaking stairs, Rahel following. He flung the door open. The draft blew the candle flame to gigantic size, illuminating the picture high upon the opposite wall. In the momentary flash of light it was a living form. The dingy wall had parted and let in the mist-sweet, white, cloud-radiance of night, adown which sped toward the trembling, aged man the glorious figure of the young Messiah. For a moment he was overcome by fear and reverence, and awed into silence by the majesty of beauty.

Then his nature reasserted itself. He remembered that Rahel had begged him not to come. The truth dawned upon him. His face grew cruel and thin. Unspeakable anger shone from the narrow little eyes upon her who had broken the Law and a second time kept him from the vision. A hideous Hebrew type became visible beneath the

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mask which habit made. From under the snarling, lifted upper lip, long teeth protruded like tusks, and his voice was hoarse with wrath.

“Rahel, did you do that?”

No answer.

“Rahel, I say, did you do that?”

The strain of the day and the past two weeks had exhausted her. The face that looked back at him was as white and as emotionless as the dead. In the dulled eyes shone no light of comprehension.

“God of Abraham! — and painted in the place sacred to Jerusalem and the Temple! Never shall I gain the vision — never! never!” His shrunken body quivered like a leaf in the wind. “Now I shall never gain the vision!” Tears, pitifulness, a world of disappointment, trembled in his voice.

“I have sinned grievously. I have not kept the Law. It says: ‘If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off.’ And I let her live when she

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offended first — I let her live — Oh, God of Abraham — I let her live — ”

“Do you understand what you have done; that you have defiled the house; that you have broken the express command of the Torah: ‘Thou shalt have no other Gods before me;’ that you have kept me from the vision? Do you understand?” The old anger flashed its wild light over his face and rang tempestuously in his voice. “Do you understand?”

“*There! — take that! — and that! —*” He struck her upon the head with all the force of his uplifted arm. “I will seal up the door; I will disclaim to my God accountability of this room and its contents! Now, O God, I have done as Thou commandest: ‘If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off.’”

In falling, Rahel’s temple struck a stone uncovered of plastering at the foot of the old rabbi’s wall, and she lay motionless, a thin stream of bright blood trickling down her cheek.

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After fastening the door and sealing it securely and disclaiming, as was the custom on the eve of the Fourteenth of Nisan, accountability for anything forbidden found beneath his roof, he went back to his blind and aged wife, where he said grace with fervent solemnity and partook of the sacred meal.

That night the Hamburg fire broke out. The inhabitants of the Ghetto barely escaped. They were well-nigh forgotten. When the gate-keepers remembered them and let them out, they were on the verge of being roasted like rats in a trap.

Among the first to reach the Great Gate and wait were Gaon and his wife. Rahel was not with them. Faithful to his vow, he had left the door of the old rabbi's room sealed and fastened.

The devastation of that terrible fire is a matter of history. It is numbered among the calamities that have befallen the human race. When, days later, the fire had sub-

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sided, nothing of the swarming Ghetto buildings was left but charred and crumbling wood.

When Easter dawned, bright and smiling, there still rose from this burnt and blackened district wreaths of smoke and white steam, up-curling reverently round the base of the indestructible stone of the old rabbi's wall which, alone, of all the Ghetto, still stood erect, ascending like a peace offering of incense toward the glorious figure that looked down from above, a figure glowing with youth and beauty, and framed in the glittering light of spring — radiant, triumphant, indestructible, immortal — the King — the Hebrew Christ!

THE END

~~May 15 1913~~
MAY 15 1913
MAY 24 1913

